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The Cut Flower QUARTERLY

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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Know Your Numbers

Dave Dowling

If you're a regular gym goer, you've become accustomed to the "January Crush", when all the New Year's resolutions kick in. The parking lot is full, and all the treadmills and exercise equipment are taken by new members who recently joined the gym. They're working on their beach bodies and hoping to look like the buff models in the ads that were everywhere in December. Gym owners know that many of these "newbies" won't last more than a month or two before they change back to their previous couch potato lifestyle, and the crowded gym gets back to normal. It's part of their marketing strategy: sign up as many new members as they can so they can collect those monthly dues.

ASCFG membership has exploded in recent years, with no letup in sight. Membership has tripled in five years. But we don't have a January Crush of new members. We get new members every week. Year round. Lots of them. Just look at the list of new members from the past three months listed on page(s) 42-43. It seems like there is a new flower farmer popping up every day. But unlike the local health club or gym, we want our members to last more than just a month or two. We want them to be members for years.

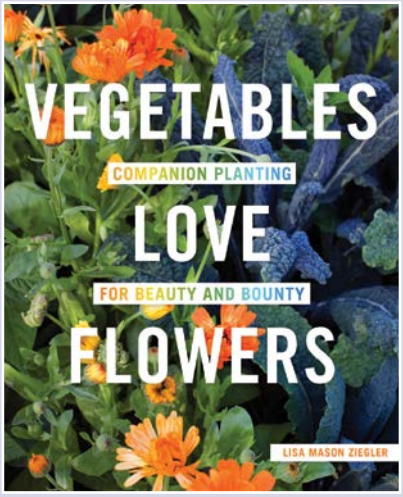
What do we do to keep our members engaged and informed, and active in the ASCFG? We produce this magazine you're holding, the only magazine for professional cut flower growers. We produce conferences and meetings throughout North America, including our twice a year Growers' Schools which are always filled to capacity. We have a private Facebook group just for our members, for sharing and learning among ourselves. We have our Short Cuts email that goes out to members several times a year. We also have available several books that should be on every flower grower's desk.

We're lucky, because the average flower farmer is, well, not quite average. Our members range from young entrepreneurs starting what could be a lifelong career, to growers starting their new dream business after retirement from a job that may not have been a dream job. We have members who have been farming veggies for years and have decided that cut flowers are going to be part of the crop mix. We have members with small farms, medium farms, and mega farms. One thing all these members have in common is a desire to grow the best cut flowers possible. (At least I hope that is everyone's goal.)

An important thing for all you newer flower farmers to understand is the value of your product, and the investment in time, money, and hard work that goes in to creating those flowers. So often, newer growers unknowingly undersell their flowers, without calculating the cost of growing them. Prices may vary from city to town, or urban to rural. That's normal. But your prices should cover your production expenses, along with something for retirement, vacations, and the fun things in life. Your prices should also be in line with other growers in your area. If you price your flowers lower, and start a price war, it's just a race to the bottom. And no one can survive on the bottom.

Take the time to calculate your true costs of production, based on expenses, labor, and desired profit, to be sure you're not only making a profit, but not undercutting other sellers.

Dave Dowling is a Sales Representative and Warehouse Manager for Ednie Flower Bulb. Contact him at dave@edniefloweribulb.com



Order your copy of Lisa Ziegler's new book at www.thegardenersworkshop.com

Flowers Make You Happy, But My Business Might Not

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick

You can't be everything to everyone. It's true in our personal lives and it's especially true in business. Whether you're a small business just starting out or a larger, more established company, most of us in business are pleasers. We never want to say no to a client, a job, a chance to make money or an opportunity to make someone happy. However, it's impossible to provide every product and every service our clients want, when they want them, for the price they want to pay for them. It's hard to set boundaries in business, but it's critical for your success and sanity.

Ellen:

Local Only

When we started Local Color Flowers back in 2008, we did it with the intention of providing locally-grown flowers to clients for weddings. That was the plan. We learned quickly that using only local flowers for weddings was not easy. In fact, it was downright hard. Most clients were on board with using local, with some exceptions: If only they could get one camellia as an homage to their grandmother who loved camellias, or if only they could carry calla lilies since that was what their mother carried, then all the rest could be local. For our first few weddings, we obliged. A gardenia here, a blue hydrangea there—what could it hurt? The client was happy, right? But...we weren't happy. Shouldn't we be happy too? There were more than a few reasons that using non-local flowers wasn't working for us. We didn't have strong relationships with the wholesalers because we never bought flowers from them. Buying local, all of our sales were direct from the grower. We didn't have a need to buy from the wholesaler except for these out-of-season blooms.

Without these relationships, the occasional purchase of a client's special bloom was always wrought with trouble, from high prices to sketchy dependability. Plus, we didn't understand how to work with these out-of-season blooms. They came in boxes, were hard to hydrate, and really, were not as fabulous as their local counterparts. The final thought was that we wanted to provide something unique, something environmentally responsible, something that no one else was providing. Buying flowers out of season based on the desires of the client was what everyone was doing. So we drew a line in the sand. We were going to be local only. It wasn't a criticism of other models, it wasn't a model that we claimed should be replicated, and it definitely was not a model that all potential clients liked or understood. It was just the right model for us.

Evolving Priorities

In the early years of our business, we were hungry. We took every wedding we could. For the money, for the experience, for the fun of it—because that's what you do. We generally didn't say to no to anything even when it wasn't lucrative, or interesting, or fun. One such example was providing flowers for weddings on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. To get to the Eastern Shore, we needed to cross the Bay Bridge, a four-mile bridge across the Chesapeake Bay. The traffic at the bridge is always bad but it's never worse than on the weekends in the summer and fall when people are going to the Maryland and Delaware beaches. The wait can be hours. The bridge is also often closed for wind and accidents. As you can imagine, delivering

weddings across this bridge was beyond stressful. There was no way to predict how long the delivery would take. It could be a quick trip across, or we could actually be delayed so long we miss the wedding. We decided, after many years of stress, to stop taking weddings across the bridge. It was a hard decision, because we never want to turn down work. Now, however, it seems like a no-brainer.

Rules Were Made to be Broken

We put rules in place for reasons. Some of ours include: No deliveries on Saturdays (because we really need to focus all of our attention on weddings), and no deliveries outside of Baltimore (because we can't charge enough for the delivery to make it worth it). However, if I'm being honest, these are two rules that are often broken. For preferred or VIP clients, we'll often make exceptions to these rules. There is little downside besides a small inconvenience, and the payoff is big because the clients know that we are going out of our way to meet their needs. Hopefully, the result is that the client will be loyal and will continue to order in the future.

Laura Beth:

Your Superpower

Making decisions about plants in the privacy of our farms is much easier than making decisions that directly affect our customers. But the ability to say no is the single most important superpower that stands between us and burnout. So, think about it like that: it's a superpower, and it will feel awesome to wield it at just the right moments.

For florists, we have a big old document that says NO, NO, AND NO all over it. We call it Ordering Information, and it lays out our expectations clearly and in writing: our minimums, delivery fees, delivery days, payment methods we take, how our availability list works, how to order, pricing, and pre-ordering. Each florist who wants to be on our availability list now gets this document in an email, and it does a great job of saying "We do exactly these things, so please don't bother us about doing other things. Thank you very much (tips hat)."

The most common request that I say no to is pre-ordering. Florists often want to pre-order for spring weddings, which for us is an absolute NO. We have no idea whether it will be a warm or a cool spring, and we don't have temperature-controlled greenhouses to thwart the weather. It's not worth the risk of promising something we might not have.

We do allow pre-ordering in certain cases, but only for the fall. Florists love to pre-order dahlias, which we're okay with, so long as they order by the color and not the exact variety. That way, if we need to supplement our coral dahlias with another farmer's to complete an order, the florist expects that they may get more than one shade of coral.

A final note on this subject: we allow only florists who have worked with us for one full season to pre-order. That's because it takes time to develop a relationship of trust on both sides. The few times I did let a new florist pre-order with us, I was up nights worrying about it. Would I have everything I promised? What if some evil, foreign bug wiped out all of our dahlias in one night? It's an unlikely scenario, but if it did happen, someone who has worked with me for at least a full season knows that I will do everything in my power to fulfill my promises, and forgive me if I make a mistake. Someone who's never met me might not understand or forgive.

I actually had one florist get angry with me because she wanted to pre-order, despite having never worked with us before. She wanted to give me references, and included a long list of her credentials in her email. I was very tempted to say "Yes, it's okay this one time." but then I remembered my superpower. I could say no, and forgo weeks of stress about her order. It look several polite but firm explanations that we simply do not take pre-orders from florists we've never worked with for her to get the message. She ended up getting over her frustration and ordering from our weekly availability list, so I got her business anyway! And I slept great.

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The Hardest Person to Say "No" to Is Yourself

I tend to overwork, which leads to burnout. I've learned that a few hard lines in the sand are key to my mental health during the season. Here are my rules:

- Absolutely no work on Sundays before dinner. After dinner, I usually make my to-do lists for the week.
- Honor the Sunday 2 o'clock nap.
- Friday afternoons are more chill. I take a beer out to the field, or stop working early.
- I'm a farmer, and if that means being a granny, so be it. I go to bed at 8:30 p.m. if I want to.
- I keep a loose count of my working hours each week. It's good to know how much I'm working, so that I can feel perfectly fine binge-watching "Frasier" on weekends.
- No matter how tired I am, I try to shower after work. My friends (and my husband) appreciate it.
- I make lunch the night before. I can't tell you how many times I've kicked myself for coming in to lunch and finding only an over-ripe avocado.
- If I can, I enjoy rainy days! What's the point of being a farmer if I can't wear my sushi pajamas during the daytime every once in a while?

In Conclusion

Where do you draw lines? What's the hardest thing to say no to? Email us at butterbeefarm@gmail.com. We want to hear from you! And don't forget: you got into this business because you wanted to make your own schedule and run your own life. Freedom is choice, and that means saying no sometimes. Enjoy it!

Ellen Frost is owner of Local Color Flowers. Contact her at ellen@locoflo.com

Laura Beth Resnick is owner of Butterbee Farm. Contact her at butterbeefarm@gmail.com

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Spring Meadow

The Accidental Flower Farmer

Jodi Helmer

Dandelion Farm went from virtual vegetables to a thriving flower farm

Teresa Tibbets might be the only flower farmer who drew inspiration from a video game.

In 2015, Tibbets watched her oldest son, then five, plant, water, fertilize and harvest virtual vegetables with the flick of a video game controller. She saw it as a sign that he needed to spend more time outside, digging in the dirt and learning what it took to grow a successful garden without the help of on-screen robots.

Tibbets transformed the backyard of her Lander, Wyoming, home into a thriving market garden and, together with her son, sold produce at the local farmers' market. On a whim, she cut flowers from her garden and took those to market, too.

"It was such a last-minute thing; I don't even think I stripped the leaves off the stems in those first bouquets," she recalls.

No one seemed to mind. In fact, customers clamored for the fresh blooms. As the sole market vendor selling flowers, Tibbets sold out week after week. The unexpected success led the part-time research biologist to get serious about flower farming. She launched Dandelion Farm in 2016.

"I like to tell people that flower farming found me; it started out as a lesson for my son and it turned into something for me," Tibbets says.

Connecting to the ASCFG

Although she had a lot of gardening experience, Tibbets felt overwhelmed at the idea of running a commercial company. To help get her footing, Tibbets contacted other growers, including Don Lareau of Zephyros Farm and Garden in Paonia, Colorado, for advice. In addition to sharing growing tips, Lareau encouraged Tibbets to join the ASCFG. Membership helped Tibbets realize, "This was a business, and I needed to take this to the next level."

With the help of the small business center in Lander, Tibbets created a website and started marketing Dandelion Farm. Her first big leap of faith was offering CSA shares. Ten members signed up for the first season, forcing Tibbets to up her game in the garden.

"Offering a CSA was so different than going to the market," she explains. "I could decide not to go to the market but, with the CSA, I committed to people and needed to produce bouquets for them every week. It took me from being a casual market gardener to running a business."

Tibbets started out growing a lot of different flowers, including salvia, scabiosa, sunflowers, and stock. Yarrow was—and remains—one of her favorites.

The cold climate meant getting in cold-season annuals long before the last frost, and adding hoophouses to help shield tender dahlias from frequent cold snaps. In its first official season, Dandelion Farm produced more than 100 different varieties of flowers—more than Tibbets wanted to manage going forward.

"I decided to scale up: that meant growing fewer varieties and focusing on things that worked well in order to produce *en masse*," she explains.

Tibbets chose to focus on "workhorses" like dianthus, snapdragons, sunflowers, ranunculus, sweet William, peonies cosmos, zinnias, and gladiolus. The cut-and-come-again flowers helped fill buckets for the farmers' market and produce beautiful bouquets for the ever-expanding CSA.

Taking the Next Steps

In the midst of scaling up the farm, Tibbets snagged a spot in a workshop offered through Floret. She traveled to Washington State for a flower farming intensive and left with much more than just knowledge of production and design.

"When I started, I really struggled with where we fit in because we're so small. I wasn't even sure about calling it Dandelion Farm because we're growing in the backyard," she says. "[At the workshop] I got to see that I was part of a community, a member of the slow flower movement, and that was so important to me.

"There is a diversity of ways to make a flower farming business and we're just one version—the rural, small town, harsh climate version," she adds. "You don't have to be a big farm to be successful."

Dandelion Farm might not be big but the business is growing. Last season, Tibbets started providing flowers for weddings. She sells buckets to DIY brides who want to create their own centerpieces, and designs bouquets for bridal parties—she's even coordinated her planting schedule around wedding dates. With space at a premium, Tibbets had to get creative to meet demand. She partnered with another grower to access more space; when she had more brides requesting peonies than plants in her garden, she started knocking on doors.

"I asked all around town about cutting buds for weddings," she says. "People were so happy to help out, to know that their flowers were being used in weddings. This winter, I got a lot of calls (from the neighbors) asking if I was going to need their peonies again."

Figuring out how to keep up with demand is a key challenge for Dandelion Farm.

Tibbets has reached capacity for CSA subscriptions and weddings. Expanding the farm would require hiring help and possibly renting (or purchasing) more land.

For now, Tibbets is grateful that her sons are learning the value of hard work and doing their part to help on the farm, noting, "They see that it's not as simple as robots farming; Mother Nature is a hard boss."

Jodi Helmer is a freelance writer in North Carolina.
Contact her at jodi@jodihelmer.com

30 Things to Do at the Raleigh Conference

1. Study at on-farm Growers' School.
2. Plan to make your farmers' market display stand out.
3. Impress your old friends with your floral design skills.
4. Meet new friends and impress them with your floral design skills.
5. Figure out exactly which pests are eating your plants.
6. Get dressed up for the Anniversary Banquet.
7. Absorb the passion shared by 400 enthusiastic cut flower growers.
8. Attain a better understanding of the tax code and how it affects your business.
9. Discover the difference between holding solutions and hydrators.
10. Locate other farms and growers in your area.
11. Adapt your business to changing trends.
12. Put a face on the ASCFG staff.
13. Share meals with members from across the United States and Canada.
14. Find out the stars and the b-list of the ASCFG Trials.
15. Improve your lisianthus production.
16. Talk to suppliers face to face.
17. Dance in a barn.
18. Understand how to price your products based on your expenses.
19. Show off your tricks during Farm Hacks.
20. Tour two terrific farms.
21. Learn how to identify weeds, and then kill them.
22. Experience a total immersion in cut flower knowledge.
23. Determine if your web presence is optimal.
24. Investigate high tunnels: how many do you need?
25. Become pen pals with your tour bus seatmate.
26. Thank your Board of Directors for their service.
27. Buy a copy of *Postharvest Handling of Cut Flowers and Greens*.
28. Get down and dirty with soils.
29. Determine your work-life balance.
30. Have a ball.

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New Mealybugs Showing up in Woody Cut Stems

Stanton Gill

As imports continue their impacts on North America and the rest of the world, an influx of new plant pests goes right along with them. One of these is a South American mealybug now showing up on roses and other woody plant material. Cut flower growers growing and selling heirloom roses, and ornamental trees and shrubs must be on the lookout for the obscure mealybug, *Pseudococcus virburni*.

In November of 2017, a garden center manager in Maryland noticed that rose plants shipped from Florida sported clusters of mealybugs at each of the branch axils. Samples were sent to mealybug specialist Dr. Douglass Miller of the USDA, who identified it as the obscure mealybug, and noted that it has turned up in several locations in the U.S. It was found years ago on California grape vines, and has now moved onto almond trees. Both grapes and almonds are important economic crops.

The obscure mealybug is a polyphagous feeder, meaning it feeds on a wide range of plants—over 295 species—including annuals, herbaceous perennials, evergreens, and deciduous species. When you purchase plants, inspect them closely to be sure you do not bring this mealybug into your operation.

What to Look For

The body of the female varies from pink to light purple with white filaments projecting from the body. A mature adult female is about 3 millimeters in length. There are two long anal filaments arising from the abdomen. If you cut a female in half, the blood that comes out is clear to white in color. The eggs are light gray to yellow, and laid in an ovisac much like citrus mealybug. If you see something that looks like this, contact your department of agriculture or get a sample to your university extension office for definitive identification.

Control Options

If you develop a problem with mealybug I suggest trying the insect growth regulator (IGR) called Enstar II. When applied to immature mealybugs, it prevents them from shedding their skins and progressing into the next life stage, which leads to death.

Two other materials that work well are Endeavor and Aria. Both stop up the insects' feeding stylets, starving them to death. In 2017 we tested Mainspring, a relatively new systemic insecticide, applied as soil drench at 8 oz/100 gallon for citrus mealybug on coleus. It took almost a month to show efficacy, but we obtained a very high level of control with this material 30 days after treatment.

Stanton Gill is an extension specialist (professor rank-principal agent) in IPM and entomology with the University of Maryland Extension based at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center in Ellicott City. He is also a professor in the Landscape Technology Program at the Germantown Campus of Montgomery College. Contact him at sgill@umd.edu

Bugs Happen
Stanton Gill, Extension Specialist in IPM and Entomology , University of Maryland Extension
and Professor with Montgomery College Landscape Technology Program

Are those Minions or Mealy bugs?

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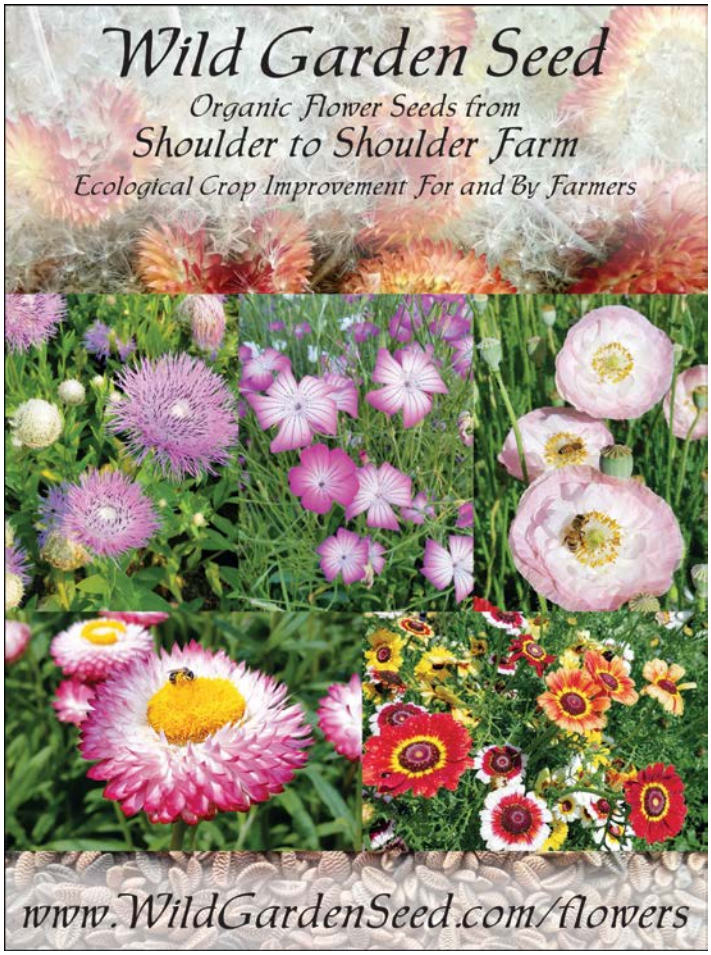

Setting the Stage for Locally Grown Flowers and Musical Interaction in the Rogue Valley, Oregon

James M. DelPrince, Mississippi State University
Coastal Research and Extension Center, Biloxi, Mississippi
Joan Thorndike, La Mera Gardens, Medford/Ashland, Oregon
Mark Applebaum, Stanford University, Stanford, California
Jared Brown, Southern Oregon University, Ashland, Oregon

Flower growers are curious about learning how their crops are used, but rarely have the chance to "see them in action", where they end up, and their positive effects on people. As horticulturists, we know that a mixed bunch of flowers will brighten the consumer's home, or perhaps the bouquet will be given to a customer's friend who needs a lift. Flowers grown by ASCFG members find their way into voluminous church arrangements and in brides' trembling hands. Some even locate their way to the performing stage. That is exactly what happened with the springtime blooms from ASCFG member Joan Thorndike's Le Mera Gardens, Ashland, Oregon, in March of last year.

The *Concerto for Florist* was featured in the Oregon Fringe Festival, a series of exhibitions, plays and musical performances, sponsored by the Oregon Center for the Arts at Southern Oregon University (SOU). See http://oregonfringefestival.org/. The festival is organized entirely by students who write, select, organize, and perform in the festival. Jared Brown, who recently graduated with a Master of Music in Performance at SOU brought *Concerto* to the Festival after working with its composer, Stanford University Professor Mark Applebaum http://www.markapplebaum.com/, during a residency at SOU. Applebaum is a distinguished musician and composer and his works are performed worldwide.

Concerto's music is not written in a conventional way using traditional notes and staves, but with precisely timed ensemble improvisations, instructions for particular sonic textures, and diverse musical rituals. Fleshed out in numerous, colorful inks and peppered with instructions for musicians to complete various performance art tasks, the score highlights (and brings humor to) mundane chores associated with everyday life. These undertakings comprise several dozen mini-performance art pieces, such as cutting a pizza, handing out towels to the audience, pouring a glass of water on top of an umbrella held by a fellow musician and mixing a martini. At the center of this work is a floral designer, working, building, arranging and completing a series of floral designs.

This is a challenging but fun performance, and allows for creating floral designs that are not stereotypically pretty or even commercially desirable. The work demands that large-scale designs be completed within the performance duration of precisely 50 minutes. In keeping with the music's aesthetics, the plan was to develop sculptures of fresh, gorgeous flowers, yet maintain a somewhat outrageous appearance.

Collaboration Across the Country

As the featured "floral soloist", DelPrince began by searching the ASCFG website for members near Ashland, Oregon. "I was delighted to find Le Mera Gardens and discover that not only was Joan near the area, but that she was just miles from the performance site." A few emails and phone calls secured an arrival date and a general floral needs list. Time was precious, so instead of walking through acres of plants, Joan harvested samples ahead of time that showcased the best early-season flowers and foliage as well as how they could be sold (by the bunch, by the bucket). This showcase was waiting for DelPrince and Brown at one of the farm locations early in the morning, thus helping them to facilitate design concepts quickly. Once the flowers were chosen (the most important part), props were considered during a three-hour visit to a local Home Depot.

The first design was built around the idea of an arrangement on wheels. Physical movement of the work, both in progress and completed, was an objective for the sculpture. A metal dolly was used as the basis, and closet storage racks were cable-tied to a dolly frame, creating a skyscraper-like scaffold in grays and charcoals. Concrete reinforcement wire was bent and curved to create dynamic lines, pre-attached to the frame. Cardoon foliage (*Cynara cardunculus*) was arranged in rigid lines followed by succulent ornaments, made with wire spirals encircling the severed plant. Glass test tubes held Icelandic poppies and dangled in a line. The floral sculpture, named *Contraption*, was finally overwrapped with contrasting red vinyl "danger/peligro" tape.

James M. DelPrince
Contraption, 2017
Artichoke, Icelandic poppies, eucalyptus,
metal racks, dolly, danger tape
35 x 315 x 22

Contraption, detail.

The second design, *Tubular Belles*, combined the tenets of European mass design with Sogetsu Ikebana flair. Dried branches were harvested from a secret excursion to a private home trash heap, then encased with foam pipe insulation which allowed the twigs' lines to extend, flop and bend. A feminine mix of pink peonies and apricot LA hybrid lilies paired with pink and purple lupines completed the design.

A third assemblage used a blue vinyl Adirondack chair as its base. Holes were drilled into the chair using an electric drill and 3/16" bit. Wire netting was added to create body, and fresh flower foam, provided by Oasis Floral Products, was affixed to the frame. The chair's arms and sides were decked with *Viburnum opulus*, lilac, Dutch iris, and Euphorbia. Drapes of glittered, blue Curaçao-colored netting filled in the gaps and created an evil sea queen's prototypical throne (*I Got Rhythm Really Put Me on the Map*).

James M. DelPrince
Tubular Belles, 2017
LA hybrids, peonies, lupine, ghostwood,
pipe insulation, duct tape

James M. DelPrince
I Got Rhythm Really Put Me on the Map, 2017
Viburnum, lilac, iris, euphorbia, vinyl chair,
wire, floral foam, tulle, martini.
37 x 49 x 42

Art is Where You Find It

This musical work's life began several years ago (2000) and has since been performed seven times in five locations. It started with a discussion on a commuter plane ride from Memphis, Tennessee to Columbus, Mississippi. Applebaum's concept is that all trades have their own inherent artistry and performance attributes, whether it be dance and music, or plumbing and floristry. The first performance of *Concerto for Florist* occurred in a bagel café in Starkville, Mississippi and featured a single design of green apples, blue hydrangea, and invasive *Rumex crispus* (curly dock) formed into a 12-foot sculpture hanging from ceiling rafters and resembled a dripping funnel.

Concerto for Florist has also been performed with the La Jolla Symphony & Chorus (2011), Steven Schick, conductor, and used flowers grown in the San Diego area. Due to the large scale of the orchestra and performance stage, larger blooms were selected including Gerbera, Oriental lilies, and football chrysanthemums. Floral containers exploited typical stage props; a 10-foot ladder and a scissor lift. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuhIAvKhOb0 , highlights from that presentation, produced by University of California Television.

Artistic interaction is probably as old as humanity. Music partners with dance; theater with costume design. Painters strive to capture the beauty of nature, finding flowers both a muse and a subject. When flowers are part of the fusion, ASCFG members take notice. When consumers consider flowers and floral design, it benefits the entire floriculture industry.

Concerto for Florist and the Oregon Fringe Festival were produced by a grant from the Oregon Center for the Arts.

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Concerto for Florist, Oregon Fringe Festival, 2017
Drew Wright, percussion; Bryan Jeffs, percussion; Tessa Brinkman, flutes; Jim DelPrince, flowers; Mark Applebaum, composer, electric guitar, Mouseketier electronic sound-sculpture, keyboard; Terry Longshore, percussion; Jared Brown, percussion; David Bithell, trumpet, electronics.

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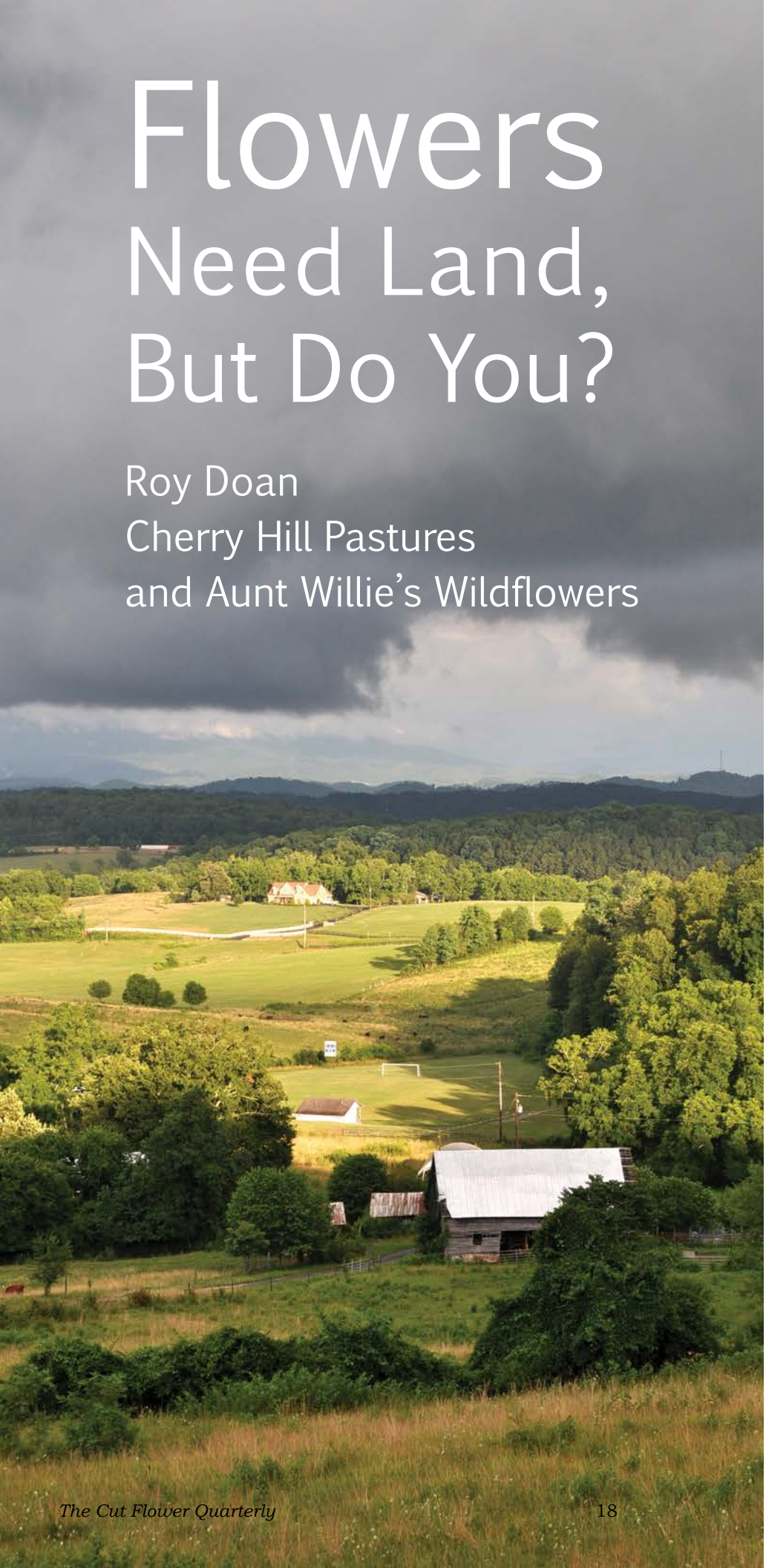
Flowers Need Land, But Do You?

Roy Doan
Cherry Hill Pastures
and Aunt Willie's Wildflowers



Okay, you are young and energetic, or maybe old and grouchy, and you have decided you are going to be a flower farmer. Good decision! Now, unless you already have land, your next thought is getting some land. This presents a good news/bad news dilemma.

Let's start with the bad news. In almost all areas of the U.S. and most of Canada, farm or ranch land is priced way above its agricultural production value. Even considering the ups and downs of the real estate cycle, this has been true since the inflation decade of the 1970s. An extreme example is northern Virginia, where we have several ASCFG members. In some cases it would cost you $120,000 to buy the land to graze one cow, and the income from that cow would be $400-$700 per year. Good luck making those land payments.

Why are farm prices so inflated? The first reason, of course, is developers bidding high prices on land to develop into high-rent residential and commercial properties.

Farm Livin' is the Life for Me

Allan Nation, author of *Land, Livestock & Life*, calls the second reason the urban economy. He explains that wealthy people in cities want an escape to the countryside. They want the lifestyle, great views, and beautiful scenery. They want to show off their property to their city friends. They want to get away from noise and pollution. Mr. Nation adds that "They need to feel the isolation of" open spaces and "Reawaken their spirituality.". Ranch consultant Greg Simonds sums it up best "They've got money. They want happiness".

Now it's time for the good news. First, you need to realize that you do not have to *own* the land; you just need *control* of the land. You can do this with a well-structured lease agreement. An advantage that specialty cut flower growers have over livestock farmers such as myself and conventional crop farmers is you do not need

large parcels of land. This gives flower farmers more flexibility when pursuing land. There are ASCFG members farming small vacant city lots in large and small urban areas. My wife Linda flower farms on less than one acre.

Now, how do you approach the landowners about leasing the property? Mr. Nation advises a strategy of learning the needs and problems of the landowners and providing them with solutions. Once city people take ownership, most of them quickly discover they do not like the hard work and expense that it takes to maintain the beauty of the property. Get creative and come up with the solutions to these problems.

Here are some examples of selling points you can use. Your cut flower business will help to preserve and even add to the beauty of the land, and at the same time reduce the owner's cost of maintaining the land. You make the management decisions in the business, and the owner is free to wander in the beauty you are providing.

You as a flower farmer are also helping to lower the property tax on the land. In most situations, agricultural land that meets certain requirements is taxed at a reduced rate. In my county in Tennessee, farmland that produces at least $1500 of farm products is taxed at only 25% of appraised value. Another financial point for the owner is that the rental income the farmer is paying him/her is considered passive income, and subject only to income tax, and not Social Security and Medicare taxes. Again, be creative and find ways to help the landowner.

Land Spreading Out So Far and Wide

Let's also discuss your financial situation as owner of a cut flower farming business. First, remember that it will be very difficult to pay for land with the profits of a farming business because land is so expensive. Second, your rental payments are tax deductible as a business expense, but agriculture land that you own cannot be depreciated to reduce taxes as most other assets can. Third and most important, in any company your money needs to be spent on things that produce income and enhance profit. This is true especially for start-up farm businesses. Most farm businesses are structured for failure because so much capital is tied up in non-income-producing assets, and there is not enough cash flow to cover the cost of these so-called assets, including land.

The two agriculture business authors that I respect the most (Allan Nation, and Dave Pratt, owner of Ranch Management Consultants) both agree on this one principle: first build your business, and later you can buy land with after-tax dollars.

In his book, *Your Successful Farm Business*, Joel Salatin writes about a woman from Edmonton who "Lived in a…condominium, had no money, no land, but had a burning passion to become a farmer." She creatively persuaded a friend to let her put a garden in the friend's backyard. Then the friend's neighbor wanted a garden, and by the time Joel spoke with the woman "She was farming 18 backyards full time, with one part-time employee, and her entire farm infrastructure consisted of hand tools that she carried on a special rack on her bicycle." A great example of creativity overcoming a lack of capital.

The question that many of you probably have now is "What if I already own land?" You'll have to wait for the next article for the answer.

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Aunt Willie's Wildflowers,
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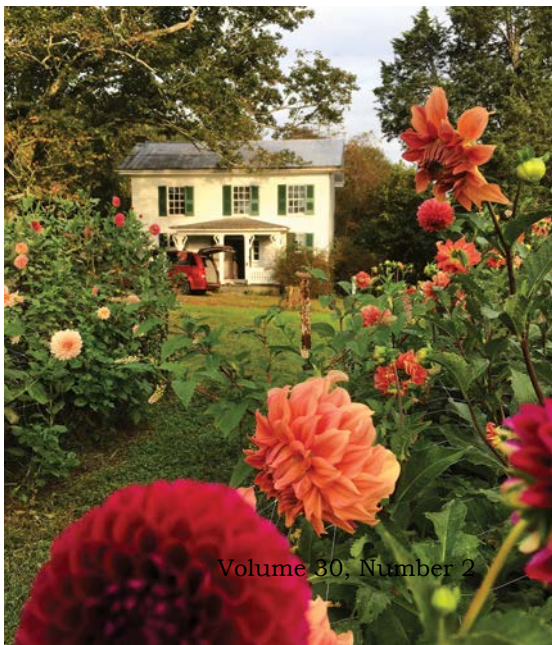

New Floral Business Models at the Slow Flowers Summit

Debra Prinzing

There is a sweet spot in our industry when flower farmers make personal connections with floral designers, and I've heard time and again how rewarding it is for flower farmers to see their fresh, local and seasonal botanicals elevated as floral art by talented designers. It is these types of face-to-face connections between grower and florist that has propelled local flowers to be "the most exciting story in the floral industry today," as one leading floral educator recently told me.

Yet reaching out to the mainstream floral industry continues to be a challenge and that is one reason I launched both American Flowers Week in 2015 and last year offered a one-day symposium for floral designers called the Slow Flowers Summit (previously covered in these pages by Lennie Larkin of B-Side Farm).

That the Slow Flowers Summit coincided with the annual conference of the American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD), held last year in Seattle, was a happy coincidence. Several AIFD members and media attended the Slow Flowers Summit, curious to see what the buzz was all about. Rather than competing with what is considered the leading professional association in floristry, I wanted to add local flowers to the conversation.

The effort has led to an invitation from AIFD to speak on "Field to Vase: Connecting Grower, Florist and Consumer" as part of the group's first-ever "Field to Vase Florists" educational track at this year's Symposium. The track is promoted as "acknowledging the movement toward sustainability and

locally grown, AIFD welcomes industry professionals who share the farmer/floral artist lifestyle."

AIFD's leadership also invited Slow Flowers to produce our second annual Slow Flowers Summit and share its symposium venue by providing conference space and promoting the event. The Summit will taking place on Friday, June 29th (the day prior to AIFD's opening session) at the Marriott Wardman Park in Washington, D.C.

I've asked this year's speakers (flower farmers, farmer-florists and floral industry leaders) to focus on new business models in floral design. Christina Stembel of San Francisco-based Farmgirl Flowers' keynote presentation will help attendees think about scaling their studio or farm to new levels. Casey Schwartz and Kit Wertz, partners in Los Angeles-based Flower Duet, will share their recipe for diversifying a floral design studio to include workshops, tours, weddings and events, as well as online education. Kelly Shore of Petals by the Shore (Maryland) and Mary Kate Kinnane of The Local Bouquet (Rhode Island) will present floral designs inspired by their favorite flower farms and discuss best practices for local sourcing. Jonathan Weber of Pittsburgh-based greenSinner will be joined by ASCFG member Jessica Hall of Harmony Harvest Farm (Virginia) and Christina Stembel to pull away the curtain on flowers, technology and infrastructure. And we'll close the session with two pioneering urban flower farmers: Mud Baron of Muir Ranch (Pasadena) and Walker Marsh of Tha Flower Farm (Baltimore).

I am excited by the diverse range of experiences and voices coming together for a day that promises to enrich professionals and thought leaders in the progressive floral community. Plus, we'll have only local and American-grown flowers on display and incorporated in the presentations, thanks to many Slow Flowers and ASCFG member farms.

See videos of last year's sessions and find registration details at slowflowerssummit.com

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Debra Prinzing is the author of Slow Flowers, Four Seasons of Locally Grown Bouquets from the Garden, Meadow and Farm*, among several other books, and the founder of the Slow Flowers site and podcast. Contact her at debraprinzing@gmail.com*

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Seasoned Growers' Meeting

Chateau Le Moyne, New Orleans

By Lynn Byczynski

At the ASCFG's first Seasoned Growers Meeting, speakers explored multiple options for aging, retiring, and passing on their farms. Although most of the participants at the March meeting in New Orleans had 20-plus years of flower farming experience and were clearly thinking about a slower pace in the near future, a few young couples said they attended to start long-range planning. Judging by the animated discussions during and after speakers' sessions, the meeting tapped into a well of intense interest among flower farmers.

Poppy Davis, who is both a CPA and an attorney specializing in agricultural businesses, spoke for several hours over two days about succession and estate planning. She described the typical issues that face farmers as they age, whether they want to stay on the farm until death or pass it on sooner. Her mission, she said, was to help participants clarify their goals, understand the legal mechanisms available to them, and make an action plan to take home with them.

She advised growers to create two succession plans: one for the immediate future and another for the long term.

The main lesson she impressed upon the group pertaining to short-term planning was to get organized and set up systems so the business can continue to operate in case the farmer gets ill, injured, or worse. "Who is going to do payroll?" she asked. "Who can deposit checks?" Every farm should add a trusted employee or family member to bank accounts so the finances can be maintained. And there should be a second-in-command who knows the customers, procedures, and farming methods, and can step in and continue to generate revenue in the farmer's absence.

Long-term succession planning is more complicated, with myriad ways farms can be sold, gifted, or passed along by inheritance. After explaining the ramifications of various legal arrangements, such as LLCs versus partnerships, Poppy urged growers to spend time thinking about their goals for themselves, their land, and their heirs. Once the farmer can articulate what he or she wants, then it's time to see an attorney, who can use the appropriate legal tools to make it happen.

In most of the estate plans she has worked on herself, Poppy said, the main issue facing farmers is how to write a will that is fair to all heirs. For example, she described a situation in which a farmer has three children but only one child works on the farm; to divide the farm equally among the three is not fair to the child who works there and could result in one of the siblings forcing a sale. But there are legal mechanisms that can ensure the land will stay in the family, while still transferring assets to all three children. She advised people to think clearly about the situation they will be leaving behind, and to make an estate plan with an eye toward "avoiding unnecessary pain and sorrow."

"The better the road map going in, the better it will be for everyone because no one thinks clearly in a time of grief," she said.

Poppy's clear presentation, depth and breadth of information, and her willingness to consult with people individually led several participants to comment that the cost of the meeting was money well spent, and might even have saved them a significant amount of legal fees when they do hire an attorney about an estate plan.

Alex and Betsy Hitt of Peregrine Farm in North Carolina are several years into a planned transition of their farm to a non-family member. Their goal is to live out their lives on the farm, but to retire from farming in about five years. Alex shared the Memo of Understanding they have signed with the former employee they are bringing on as a partner, with the intention of eventually passing the farm business on to her during their lifetimes. He described the legal and financial issues they have faced to make the transition work, and the structure they have put in place in case it doesn't.

The Seasoned Growers' meeting was about more than retiring, though. Other speakers suggested ways to improve quality of life and get additional help on the farm.

Mimo and Miranda Davis Duschak of Urban Buds in St. Louis presented information about the numerous grants they have received to build their farm. Mark Cain of Dripping Springs Garden in Arkansas described his apprenticeship program, which for 30 years has provided the labor for his farm. And he urged participants to evaluate their lives to be sure they are doing things that give them happiness and satisfaction as well as farming success. For example, he said, he has arranged the workday on his farm to permit a two-hour break for yoga every day, and he has recently started to play music with a jazz group on his day off.

"There's not that much time left, folks," he said. "What are we doing with our time?"

Lynn Byczynski is author of The Flower Farmer, *and founder and former editor of* Growing for Market. *Contact her at lynn.fairplain@gmail.com*

Poppy Davis shares her vast knowledge and expertise.

Thank you Megan McHugh and Denise Richter of Pistil and Stamen for providing flowers!

Emily Daniel, Gretel Adams, Foxie Morgan, Bev Lacey, and Lennie Larkin at the "flower bar".

Carol Larsen with her "flower bar" creation.

Jackeline and Gerard Smit.

Mimo Davis-Duschack, Lynn Byczynski, Steve Adams, Gretel Adams, Besty Hitt, Dave Dowling, and Alex Hitt.

Miranda Duschack and Janet Nutt at the "flower bar".

Denise Richter and Ben George.

Jennie Love, Jamie Rohda, Linda and Bill Doan.

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Buckets on My Mind

Do you ever have a tantrum? I do, and sometimes it's about a cheap bucket breaking and ruining my day. We all have our preferences and opinions about which buckets we like and for what, and lots of us have tricks for snagging free or discount buckets. I'm not writing this column to talk you out of any of that but I want to explore the importance of investing in plenty of the right buckets for your operation.

We reuse some free/disposable buckets from Trader Joe's and whatnot, and I like that they are black because flowers look nice in a black bucket, and I like that they are "free" so I don't feel protective of them, but they are very fragile. The rim is often what cracks first.

Sometimes that crack is sneaky so you don't notice it and you fill it with water and carefully pack an order for a designer into it. Maybe 60 stems of ranunculus, for example? That's about a $90 value here on our farm. Then maybe you pack it into the van, drive to your delivery, and as you lift the bucket out, the rim breaks and the bucket falls. Now you're out not just a free bucket, your product is damaged and maybe you don't have replacements. Or maybe you make the delivery fine, but the designers you sold these ranunculus to move them around their studio and the bucket rim breaks and the flowers fall. They might not literally blame you because life happens, but the experience they are having of your product is not pleasant. I think it's better to invest in something sturdier to protect your valuable product, and more importantly, to protect your customers' experience of your product.

A designer I sell to told me that she once mentioned that she buys flowers from me and the person she was talking to said, "Oh, Carolyn uses really nice buckets." That's pretty weird isn't it? I work hard to grow amazing flowers and this person is buzzing about the utilitarian plastic vessel!

What this tells me, though, is that people notice details. Also, we like to sticker all our buckets both as ownership and branding.

In the field we use 5-gallon buckets, oval mop buckets that are shorter and wider and less tippy, 2-gallon buckets, and a very petite black cooler "vase" that is 8" tall. We also use taller florist buckets, but in general very few of our flowers are so tall that we cut or display in anything taller than 15 inches. For display we sometimes use more decorative vases, but mostly we use black buckets of multiple sizes. For bulk flowers for DIY design clients we use exclusively white 2-gallon buckets.

Black buckets used for display.

I love it when designers I sell to bring their own buckets and transfer because it shows me that they understand that we need our buckets, and they have thought through the whole process. Still, I really prefer they take the flowers as we have carefully packed them, and return the buckets at the next ordering. Of course, this means I need to inventory more buckets because I don't want to be short on them for harvest or pack out and I don't want to pester my customers. I definitely don't ever want my customers to think "Oh, if I call Carolyn she's going to make me feel guilty about the buckets I forgot to bring back last time…"

We buy a lot of buckets but it never seems to be enough. If you're considering it, I'd suggest buying a pallet or a half a pallet of a size you use a lot of now, so you don't have bucket stress during the busy season. I often talk about the philosophy of taking

your flower business seriously, and one great way to put those ideas into practice is having the right vessel when you need it.

The 8" buckets I use so much are great for a number of things. They are a good size for our subscription bouquets, so each bouquet gets its own bucket. Also they happen to slip perfectly into my decorative zinc market buckets I use for large arrangements at weddings, so they give me a sturdy liner with a shorter capacity that allows for more dramatic arrangements, and I can just pop the bucket out and back in for transport.

My team takes good care of me so we can all avoid tantrums. If they see a bucket with a sneaky crack, they take satisfaction in breaking in completely and put it in our recycling bin. If we bypass the destruction step and it looks intact someone might try to rescue it and put it back into circulation and I'll be over here clenching my jaw.

MID-ATLANTIC

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia

Lisa Ziegler
The Gardener's Workshop
lisa@shoptgw.com

As I write, the Mid-Atlantic is teetering on the edge of spring. We had a couple of teaser days that were in the 70s, but now they seem lost again. Somehow, the chill outside feels colder when I think, want, and am desperate for the warmth of a spring afternoon!

As I am a 100% field grower with no green- or hoophouses, weather really matters to me. Lately, I've spent more time than ever pulling row covers up and then down again this past winter. The cause? We are experiencing more frequent extreme changes in weather.

Here goes an admission of age: when I first started growing in the late 90s, I put my low tunnels up in late fall on the hardy annual beds when night temperatures were dropping and staying below freezing. I literally left them until early spring with only the occasional peek under the covers during winter. This peeking BTW, is the scariest chore a farmer does. You are looking for reassurance but get scared to death when you see the little frozen popsicle plants, but all is well, they are all alive and well.

We have always had the occasional Virginia weather swings—12 degrees today and 65 degrees tomorrow—but it sure seems like they are coming more often now, and are more extreme. What this means for me as a big grower of fall-planted cool-season hardy annuals is that I no longer have the winter off. I now keep an eye on the coming temperatures to make sure my covers are up or down as needed.

What has now becoming a standard procedure is to put out two layers of lightweight row cover (Ag 19) on many of the beds, all with hoops. I don't always pull the second layer up onto the hoops, but it is there to use when suddenly plummeting temperatures are coming. This added protection buffers the change. I do this on crops that are either really important to us (bells of Ireland) or borderline hardy (*Ammi majus*) in my zone.

In the event of coming snow, I take all covers down. I made the fatal mistake this past winter of not removing them before a forecast of wet snow, and toasted a bed of poppies and bells of Ireland. Lesson refresher the hard way.

Being a farmer means living in the moment, looking to the future, and learning from the past. Go and grow!

When temperatures are forecasted to go above 55 degrees for several days, covers down.

Once nighttime temperatures dip into the 20's row covers up.

SOUTHEAST

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee

Val Schirmer
Three Toads Farm
vschirmer3@gmail.com

Here's an idea for you to use RIGHT NOW to get your name in the press, in a VERY good way!

I know you're all busy as bees and working like crazy people in the early stages of your growing season, but if you take just a few hours RIGHT NOW, there's a pretty good chance you can get some great publicity about you, your farm and what you're growing — either in your local paper, on the evening news or perhaps even both! Nothing like a little "free" advertising and all it costs is some of your extremely valuable time.

If this sounds a little familiar, that's because Judy sent out a message last March to everyone with these ideas. I'm betting you might have put it on the back burner, thinking there's no way you have the time to try it. Well, there's no time like the present.

The plan

Get on your newspaper's website, checking back through the Friday, Saturday and Sunday issues of the Living or Home sections to see who's writing Home & Garden stories. While newspapers today run quite a few stories written by syndicated columnists, there are going to be some still written by local reporters—those are the names you're looking for. While you're on the website, find the email address for who's written a few of the last stories.

Next, put together a "pitch" email to the writer, letting him/her know who you are (local grower, local expert, member of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers) and if they're planning an upcoming story on backyard gardening, you would love to help provide some easy information for their readers about how to grow a fabulous cutting garden, right alongside the veggies and herbs.

I know, you might be thinking, "Why in the heck would I help people grow their own flowers? Why would they ever want to buy flowers from ME then? Won't I just be putting myself out of business?" I can promise you this: the answer is no, you won't!

Be sure to send images of yourself, your best flowers, and your farm to reporters.

While only a tiny portion of the readers will actually create cutting flower gardens, they'll all remember you as THE expert on growing amazing flowers and foliages. You'll get publicity for you, your farm, and what you're growing that you couldn't get any other way, before the growing season swings into full swing.

In fact, when we first started selling our Oriental lily bulbs and plants at the market, friends asked whether doing that would put us out of the cut flower business. In fact, it actually worked the other way around; we sold more cut flowers to customers who purchase bulbs and plants from us! And we had a lot more credibility with them, too. They learned about growing lilies and gained more respect for who we are and what we do, and they just wouldn't cut their own! Crazy how this works.

Next, get on your phone or camera and pull out the best photos of you, your flower farm or flower field, and some of your most gorgeous flowers. Offer the best 3-5 to the reporter for the story. When we did this last year, it helped the writer visualize what we were talking about and she ended up bringing a photographer along to shoot their own images for the story.

If you're starting seeds—which we were doing—let the reporter know this too, and invite him or her to the farm to get some photos for the story.

Finally, if you're bumping up your cut flowers and foliages into six-packs to let them grow on prior to setting them out, be sure to take some to the market. After all, these are specialty cut flower varieties that just aren't available at the grocery, local big box store or even at garden centers. We sell our six-packs for $12, and you can, too. After all, the newspaper story will have already promoted how totally cool and unique these varieties are.

Include a photo or two of some of your favorite flowers ... just for inspiration!

Here's a sample pitch email (how easy is this?).

Hello, (first name)!

"We wanted to reach out to you, in the hopes you're planning a story on backyard gardening over the next few weeks. If you are, we would love to help you include some of our tried-and-true tips, tricks, and favorite varieties for an easy-to-grow backyard cutting garden.

"No matter what size garden your readers are planning, it's super easy to include gorgeous cut flowers, right alongside their vegetables and herbs. As members of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, we like to think we know a thing or two about growing the kind of flowers that make really amazing bouquets and, with just a bit of planning, your readers can grow a cutting garden to supply armloads of bouquets all summer long.

"If you'd like photos to go with your story, we have some great ones of our flower fields in full bloom last year, just as inspiration for your readers. If you'd like to come out and get some photos of us sowing seeds, bumping up seedlings, etc., we're happy to work with you on that, too."

Include some cool information about your farm in your pitch email, too. For example, here's what we said:

"This will be our 19th year growing specialty cut flowers (can you believe it!), our third since *Martha Stewart Weddings* named us one of the Top 10 farmer florists in the country and fourth year offering on-the-farm workshops. One of our very favorite topics is helping people feel confident in growing great cut flowers and foliages in their backyards, or even in pots on their patios. We also encourage them to look around their own yards for seasonal blooms and foliages to use in their bouquets—such as peonies, dahlias, blooming shrubs, and foliages—which make any arrangement all the more fabulous and natural.

(First name), please let me know if this is something you might be interested in.

Thanks very much!"

(Your name, contact information and website, if you have one)

Once the reporter "bites" on your pitch, be sure to prepare for his or her visit

Prepare for what the writer will ask you, so that your reply is easy, informative, and complete (you won't want to have your notes in sight for the interview, so take a few minutes to practice).

We would never have staged this shot on our own, but the magazine did. Then the editor and photographer gave us permission to use it.

What are your tips for growing a cutting garden? These were mine (and the reporter used them in her story).

1. Select tall, cutting flower varieties—not bedding plants. Height is on the back of the seed packets.
2. Make growing stress-free for you and the plants—use landscape fabric or mulch to control weeds.
3. Site: full sun is best; at least 6+ hours.
4. Water and fertilize.
5. The more you cut, the more they bloom.

How much space does someone need? (This is to encourage anyone with even just a bit of space.)

- 4' x 8' bed = 54 plants (on 9" centers)
- 2' x 4' bed = 27 plants!

Favorite sources for cut flower seed

While you would mention you're a commercial grower, be sure to talk about who the average consumer can order from. We mentioned Floret, Johnny's, Renee's Garden, and Thompson & Morgan.

Your favorite varieties: this is a great opportunity to talk about flowers, foliages, and herbs.

Finally, be prepared to talk about your Top 5 tips on how to extend the life of cut flowers. Ours were:

1. Cut flowers before the blooms are completely open.
2. Place flowers in a bucket full of water and set it someplace cool to let the flowers rest and suck up water for a couple of hours.
3. Put your bouquet in a spotlessly clean container.
4. Make sure there's no foliage beneath the water (and explain why that's important).
5. Use flower food in the water.

Parting words

It's important to pitch the reporter asap, so that you get on the radar, and also plant the seed about including flowers in a story they may already be planning. In our case last year, the reporter was planning on doing a story in mid- to late-April.

Don't be camera shy (even if you are). Photos will be a great part of the story. Dress as you think people believe we really look, which is cleaned up and happy (ha!).

Set up a few "photo op" spots. We pulled seedlings out of the greenhouse, had a pretty weed-free area already staged in the field and also set up a spot where we were seeding.

In the end, make it stress free! This is a great way to kick off the season, plus you're spreading the word about specialty cut flowers and what a totally awesome grower you are.

NORTH AND CENTRAL

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming

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When I looked through the most recent list of new ASCFG members I couldn't help but feel a ripple of excitement for the local flower movement. Wow, so exciting! While I was discussing the recent influx of new farmers with a prospective grower, she asked me if I thought there might be too many flower farmers soon. I told her no, I didn't think that would be a problem anytime in the near future, at least not here in the Midwest. When I think about the small percentage of flowers I am supplying for my local customers, in proportion to the amount shipped in, I know there is still plenty of room for many more growers. Of course, that means developing relationships with designers so that they see and come to value the benefit of locally grown. And here in the Midwest we're working on that.

In January our little fledgling group, Midwest Farmer Florist Collaborative, hosted a workshop for florists, growers, and prospective growers here in the Midwest. The group started as an idea from a local designer who wanted to be able to source more local product. We went from 11 of us around her table in 2016 to over 50 of us gathered together in 2018. A large percentage of the group was folks either just starting or hoping to start a flower farm. Flower farmers have always been a bit fewer and farther between here in the Midwest but this gathering gave me great hope for our future.

Our group gathered at the farm of Sheila Fitzgerald, who was one of my original florist customers and a great proponent of local flowers. Sheila's cozy barn was the ideal setting for our group. We had a full day with sessions on selling at markets, selling to florists, social media, alternative revenue streams, floral trends, and a bouquet demonstration. We were honored to have our own Judy Laushman join us and share the ASCFG's Local Flowers video. We ended the day with a drawing for door prizes and a Q & A session with all of the presenters. Excitement ran high

The Midwest Farmer Florist Collaborative met in January.

and I've had some tell me this was just the boost they needed to jump into flower farming.

So, let's get growing! I've had quite a few people ask about our production model for dusty miller here in zone 5 so thought I'd explain it in greater detail.

In our early years of growing dusty miller we had limited success with our outdoor plantings. It seemed that we usually weren't able to cut off of it until late summer. If it was rainy it looked crummy. If it was planted near the road it got dusty and looked crummy. When we planted it into black woven fabric it just sat there for weeks in the heat, with some of it eventually dying. Basically we weren't really making any profit off of it. It never overwintered for us and in my brain I had classified it as an annual for our zone. We started planting it in the hoophouse and began realizing some degree of success; however, our season was still pretty short as a spring planting wasn't ready until late summer. One winter we didn't get all the beds cleaned up in the fall, and come spring when we went out to work on it we realized that the dusty was still alive. We were able to start cutting off of it by the middle of May and continued cutting it until well into late fall. Usually it is still looking good when we've shut down our delivery route in the fall and we have nothing left to go with it. Once cold weather has set in for good we toss a piece of fabric over it and forget it until spring.

Dusty miller in May (left) and September (right).

We now devote an entire 4'x 96' bed in one of our tunnels to dusty miller. We start the seed by broadcasting it in open flats as it seems like the germination time can fluctuate quite a bit. Seedlings are bumped up into 50-cell flats so that we're setting out pretty big, beefy plants. There isn't a huge rush to get the new planting out in the spring as we're cutting off of the previous year's planting and we won't need to harvest the new planting until late summer/early fall. Planting later in the spring also fits well in our production as we're starting to get past the bulk of the spring planting rush. After a planting has spent two summers in the hoophouse it's torn out. We may experiment with leaving some in for the third season this year just to see how it does. It's so hard to rip out a healthy-looking plant! We grow both 'Candicans' and 'New Look' varieties. We find that our florists and designers mostly prefer the 'New Look' variety so we grow about 75% 'New Look' and the balance of 'Candicans'. In a four-foot hoophouse bed we are planting 5 across the bed and 6" apart in the row so it takes about 500 plants to fill half the bed.

This is just one more foliage crop that we can supply to our florists and designers, and they tell us it is far superior to what they can get through local wholesalers. From what we've experienced, dusty miller does not like to EVER be out of water, and when it is shipped in dry it sometimes never recovers. We also discovered this past summer that even though the industry standard had been 10-stem bunches; at one point in the summer it switched to 5 stems in a bunch. I don't know if this is still the norm, but I know I had a very distressed customer who had ordered it from a wholesaler for an event and then came to us in a panic to see if we could help her as she only had half the amount she needed. I think we gained a dusty miller customer for life! I love growing foliage plants as they are always there when you need them, and don't go to waste when you don't cut them that week. I think I told my husband at least a dozen times last year that if we could grow only foliage and sell it all we would.

As we begin our third season of growing exclusively for florists and designers, we're still analyzing each crop and trying to decide what is profitable for our climate and customers. My heart still wants to try everything but my brain and my calculator are telling me differently. I really felt like we were getting a handle on it until the winter volume of *The Cut Flower Quarterly* arrived in our mailbox. Seriously, even a sunflower hater like me can't resist trying those white beauties! So, back to the computer and phone I went and as more packets arrive in the mail I assure my husband that yes, I'm done ordering and yes, we'll find a place for everything. I'm not sure he believes me!

For those of you in the Midwest, when you get this I know you'll be in a flurry of spring planting but don't forget to take the time to keep some records this year so that when winter comes you'll be able to see just where your profit is coming from. Whether you're in your first year or your twentieth, I think it's a good exercise. Have a beautiful and profitable spring!

SOUTH AND CENTRAL

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana,New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah

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Raising Working Kids

Sometimes I am envious of stay-at-home parents. I am also envious of working parents. I am a work-from-home-while-I-watch-my-kids parent. This means I work full-time farmer hours and take care of my kids full time. While this was a conscious, albeit necessary, choice, it has never been an easy one. My hope is that they learn enough about being hard working and independent that it pays off in the end.

My husband and I run a farm. Not a homestead for personal use, but 15 acres of diversified crops, with over 150 varieties of vegetables and flower. We sell at three farmers' markets, we have a CSA, wholesale accounts, a dozen employees, two farm sites, chickens, sheep, greenhouses, and we design for weddings. It's a lot to manage. It would be a lot to manage without kids in tow. But, I just never felt right shipping them off when there was so much to learn and experience right here at home.

We have three kids, each with a very unique personality. One is an eight-year old boy, super smart bookworm type who works really hard to get out of work whenever possible. I also have five-year-old twins, a girl and a boy. The girl is my extra good helper who never leaves my side, which is a blessing and a curse. Her twin brother is the extra-curious, have-no-fear, always-into-trouble, never-wears-shoes, breaks-things-to-find-out-how-they-work, adventurous child.

When they were babies, it was a disaster trying to manage breastfeeding, diaper changes, and nap times while simultaneously trying to stay outside working in the hot sun and blowing dust of summer, the frigid cold winters, or waiting on eager customers lined up at the farmers' market. When they were toddlers it was impossible to keep them from ripping plants out of the ground just as fast as I was putting them in, or from interrupting just about anything I was trying to do.

Now that they are a little older, things are getting easier. They understand me when I explain to them about why we can't trample on top of the plants, even if they still do it. One is in school now; two are still at home. I am contemplating homeschooling all of them next year, but I am not sure I can

hack it, because I don't have any free time. At times I worry that they are missing out on a lot of the things that other kids get to do. It's hard to have kids in sports when every Saturday and Sunday you are busy working at the farmers' market, waking up at 4 a.m. Nor is it very easy to attend birthday parties, story time at the library, or play dates when you live far out of town and the crazy amount of work that is takes to manage a farm is never, ever done.

Despite my worries about what they are not getting, I have always known that my kids are gaining a lot from this lifestyle, too. They watch sheep give birth, knowing that those babies will grow up to become our food. My younger son is learning to count to 100 by gathering eggs with me every day. The kids see the actual results of planting a seed and watching it grow, then harvesting and eating that plant. They see that rabbits can destroy an entire crop, and that shooting them (and cleaning and eating them) has a purpose. My daughter is learning how to plant small seeds into plugs, one at a time with such determination and patience. She can envision what flower those seeds will grow into because she has seen them blooming before. I am a pretty controlling person, and sometimes I don't want to let them help with careful chores that require precision, but I am usually amazed at how much more capable they are than I give them credit for. I think this is true of kids in general. They are capable and we should be giving them real responsibilities that allow them to see this in themselves. I have to balance this ideal with the fact that we have a business and the work we do has an economic impact on our survival. So sometimes I let them help and sometimes I don't (like those super expensive seeds, I save those for myself to plant).

Many times I feel I have ignored my kids for the sake of our business. And I have been told by close relatives that they are worried the kids are neglected. Neglect is a strong word. I've often come into the house after working outside for a long stint to a major disaster, from the kids helping themselves to a snack, an entire box of cereal spread on the floor, milk all over the table, sharp knives strewn about, a pile of dirty dishes, and some happy kids playing again. And I realize that I should have come in to fix them something to eat hours before. Many a night, while I'm prepping for the farmers' market, my kids have put themselves to bed, because we are too busy to read them a story or make sure they brushed their teeth. But we do read to them almost every other night. My boys sometimes get naked and play king of the mountain on top of the giant manure pile—it takes three rounds of baths to get that mess cleaned up. Our floors are constantly covered in dirt, dust, food or mud, even though I sweep every day and I cannot fathom how other people actually keep their own houses clean, but I know they do. I often feel like a total failure as a parent. I am not a helicopter parent, I joke that I am an "under protective" parent. And I am sure my friends would agree. Partially it is just my shortcomings combined with the reality of what our life entails. Another part of it is a deliberate choice. I am trying to raise kids who have some skills, some smarts, some independence, and some work ethic.

As the kids grow, I see more and more the positive impact this lifestyle has had on them. My kids can tell a customer about how to eat kohlrabi, what a sunchoke is, and that another name for rapini is broccoli raab. My kids probably know the names of over 40 varieties of flowers. How many adults know that much?

People ask me all the time if I hope my kids will take over the farm when they grow up. To be perfectly honest, I couldn't care less if they do. I want each of them to follow their own path and do what makes them happy. That's the life that my husband and I have chosen for ourselves. Mostly what I hope they learn from growing up on the farm is the value of doing what makes you happy and that it can take a tremendous about of work and sacrifice to make that happen.

WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington

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The Pacific Northwest Cut Flower Growers Meetup.

For the third year in a row, I had the opportunity to travel ten hours to my north to attend the Oregon Small Farms Conference, and the Pacific Northwest Cut Flower Growers Meetup. It's one of my favorite weekends of the year and I wouldn't miss it for the world. The ASCFG's West and Northwest Region is pretty large, and the opportunity to get together with so many ASCFG members (and non-members) in my Region all at once is a special one. I've got to hand it to Erin McMullen and Aaron Gaskey of Raindrop Farms, Beth Syphers of Crowley House Farm, and Kathleen Barber of Erika's Fresh Flowers for putting on the meetup and the flower track of the OSU Conference.

OSU Small Farms

The first of the two sessions in the flower track was a panel composed of the lovely Isabella Thorndike Church (an ASCFG lifer) of Jacklily Floral and Le Mera Gardens, Danielle and Valiant Swan of Field to Heart, and Teresa Engbretson and Katie Elliott of My Garden Overfloweth. They spoke about "Profitable Flowers for the Northwest" and dove into their respective operations to share tips they've learned along the way.

The second session was a panel of our own South and Central Regional Director Shanti Rade, along with her husband Cory, representing Whipstone Farm, along with Jeriann Sabin and Ralph Thurston of Bindweed Farm and Deadhead. Through sharing the evolution of their farms in their unique climates and markets, both couples encouraged growers in the audience to focus on quality and customer service, and really drilled on the need to get to know what works for your particular operation.

Pacific Northwest Flower Farmers Meetup

The Meetup, now in its fourth year, has just about tripled in size since the inaugural event. It's evolved with this growth and the shifting needs of the farmer community to feature both local and distant farmers on panels, Q&A's, and hands-on demonstrations.

This year's packed schedule began with Ralph Thurston going deep into the evolution of Bindweed Farm over its decades in business. I had never met Ralph or Jeriann before so this weekend was a real treat for me. As they move into the "next phase" of their careers, one where they claim to be trying to slow down but really don't seem to be, we should feel pretty lucky that they're diving into their roles as educators. I've been eating up Ralph's Facebook posts on words of wisdom as well as specific growing information on unconventional perennials in particular. Gold, I tell you!

Next up was Carly from Killing Frost Farm with a presentation and demonstration on bringing forest products into floral design. I've never met someone who knows so much about about responsible, legal, sustainable foraging, and is able to completely transform a space using elements from the woods that I would probably overlook.

For her demonstration, she walked us through building a giant arch-like structure made from a frame of chicken wire filled with evergreen boughs, all sorts of branches, moss, and dried flowers. Her techniques were unique, ingenious, and scrappy, and the end result was unlike anything I've ever seen.

The beautiful wedding arch demo made by Carly of Killingfrost Farm.

The meetup was lucky enough to also host Hillary Alger of Johnny's Seeds. I'm sure you all know what great strides Johnny's has made in not only their cut flower selection over the past few years, but also in the growing information and reference material around cut flowers. Hillary walked us through succession planting of lots of popular varieties, flashing slides of great data they've collected on the trials farm and photos illuminating their results. Also on the topic of successions, Leah Rodgers of Rockwood Urban Farm detailed the urban operation she runs with her husband on a few plots around Portland. On leased land she incorporates a ton of cool perennials into her crop plan—something hard to get going on land you don't own! I was impressed.

The day ended with two panels running concurrently. One was a farmer panel featuring Tall Grass Farm, Rain Drop Farms, and Bindweed Farm, and the other a design panel. Since I was on the design panel I can't report back on what was going on next door! But our Q&A sessions featured many questions on bulk buckets for DIY weddings, contract provisions for full-service weddings, and questions on how to begin learning design skills. I'm pretty sure I came off as a Debbie Downer. When asked how to make bucket sales for DIY brides, my response: I don't. It's not worth it. When asked how to sell little arrangements to restaurants, my response: Do whatever you want to right now, because in a few years you'll probably feel that it's not worth it, because most restaurants won't pay what you need to make.

Luckily I was sharing the panel with Beth Syphers from Crowley House Farm and Jen Ladd from Sweet Posy, two cheerful optimists who were about to give great advice on how to make arrangements like this work for them. For now my advice to newer growers was figure out how to do really well at the wholesale game, and/or to find retail outlets that really pay for the added value of design. Finding things that work the gray in-between area of these two types of sales just doesn't work for me, but more power to those who have figured it out for their market.

In any event, there's a lot to learn up in Oregon! Thank you so much to the PNW ASCFG members and non-members for showing us how regions can come together to share information and build community. Until next year!

Design Q & A at The Pacific Northwest Cut Flower Growers Meetup.

CANADA

Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan

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Work smarter, not harder. Such a simple concept but often we do things in the most difficult way possible without thinking there might be another way. The answer might be so easy you just need to see it from another perspective.

At the September Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina there will be a session called Farm Hacks. It will be a chance for us to show off and share our super simple and super smart ideas with others. I asked some of the Canadian members to share some of their seed storing and seeding tips.

Here are some to share and I will add a few of my own.

- Organize your seeds by type and store in labeled Ziploc bags. They are easy to grab and go. The bag keeps random seeds in the bag instead of falling out. It is also helpful to organize by starting date.
- Many flower seeds are viable for several years but you should purchase pelleted seeds every year because the viability can decrease as they age.
- After many attempts at growing lisianthus the tip is to buy plugs! (I have to agree with this one. Because they take so long to grow there are a lot of ways to kill lisianthus seedlings! If you are successful in large numbers, hats off to you!)
- Grow stock, it's good for your ego! (I agree! Zinnia are great germinators and a great ego boost too!)
- Resist the urge to start seeds too early. Nothing worse than jumping the gun and having leggy or root-bound plants. (Don't give into the rush when you see others posting on social media. Know your zone and plant-out dates. Don't get ahead of yourself. But I understand: when there are mountains of snow outside you crave anything alive!)
- Buy grow lights, they are inexpensive and make stronger plants.
- Don't be afraid to give your plants haircuts. Many plants will thrive after a pinch. Sweet peas, lisianthus, dianthus, snapdragon.

Sweet pea haircut.

• Keep your pop (soda) bottles for watering seedlings. Drill small holes in the cap. It is easier to manage than a big watering can. Small seeds can wash away easily. Also works well for bottom watering because you can direct the flow of water where you want it to go. You can also cover one or some of the holes to make it an even more precise waterer.

• Make a note on your calendar in June to sow biennials. You will be so caught up in picking and weeding that you will probably forget the window of time to plant.

• Find out the proper germination requirements for each kind of seed. Some like dark, some like light, some want to be covered, some don't. Find out what they want for your best success. Don't just wing it. Jennie Love and Lisa Mason Zeigler did an awesome seed-starting presentation at the February Growers' School in Oberlin. Go to the Members Only section of the ASCFG web site to watch the video! Most types of seeds you can Google to find out the germination requirements if it isn't on the package or in the catalog. The Johnny's catalog is an amazing resource for this.

• Plant the same species in a tray, don't mix species. Some may germinate in 3 days, some take 3 weeks.

• Label the trays as you plant. You won't remember what was in the first tray after you have done 4 more.

• Keep good records of what, when, and how much you planted. It is such great information for next year. Once they are growing you can note if you think you should start earlier or later or more successions. Seeding records are only as good as you make them. YOUR records are more valuable than getting records from another grower and thinking you can copy them to have the same success. Figure it out yourself! It will be way more rewarding and relevant!

• If you didn't plant the whole seed pack, mark on the package the approximate number of seeds left. You will know for next year if you need to order more or less than the previous year.

• Don't throw out empty seed packets. Put them in a box together. You will have an instant list of what you need to order and not have to try to remember the varieties you planted last year. You think you will remember, but probably will not!

• Keep notes about how things do. If a variety didn't germinate well, mark that down. If you LOVE the colour when you are picking them, write it down. If the cucumber beetles LOVE the light-petaled sunflowers early in the season, write it down and change when you plant the light sunflowers.

• Start seeds in an open square box (wooden mandarin orange boxes work well) and then transplant into a plug tray. It is an extra step but if you want to maximize space it will ensure that you are filling your tables with full trays. Nothing worse than running out of space to put trays and then you see a tray that is half or less full.

• Seeds want to grow! If you give them the conditions they want, they will grow. Think about how they would grow in nature. You are trying to duplicate their environment.

• During mid-February, on those beautiful sunny days, if you have a tunnel, head out there and plant some hardy seeds. Ammi, larkspur, nigella, bachelor buttons, and bells of Ireland. They will sprout when the conditions are what they want. Earlier than you may think. The 'Cool Flower' idea works here in southwest Ontario for somethings but not all are hardy enough for our winter, even with protection. Take advantage of the mild February blip.

You are successful if you learn or implement one thing that you read or hear. I hope there was something in this article that made you think a different way. Be sure to attend the "Farm Hacks" presentations at the Raleigh Conference. You never know what you might learn by seeing it another way.

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Weed and Disease Control the Old-fashioned Way: With Steam

by Steve and Gretel Adams

This steam Jenny was purchased used. In its previous life it was used for tobacco farming in Quebec.

At Sunny Meadows Flower Farm, we grow cut flowers year-round in both heated and unheated high tunnels. During our extended learning curve process of greenhouse growing, we have had to deal with a few disease issues including *Rhizoctonia solani, Phytophthora*, and downy mildew, all of which had us wondering if winter growing was worth the effort.

Here in Ohio we are limited by the lack of sunshine: 200 out of 365 days a year we have a heavy cloud cover—Seattle has 230 days. Without sun December through February it's hard to dry out the greenhouses, and for soil with a high water table, the challenge is making the greenhouse inhospitable for bacteria. It was costing us revenue that not only we relied on, but so did our 1-2 winter employees. No matter what we did year after year, we had something that took out whole beds at a time, not every bed, and mostly *Matthiola*.

Since the pathogens we had thrive with cool nights/warm days and wet conditions, we started by trying to correct our cultural practices. We began by venting the greenhouses at least twice a day and raising the night temperatures to reduce the relative humidity (RH). When we were heating our greenhouses to 38 degrees at night the RH would spike to 100% as soon the sun went down and the houses were closed up for the night, creating condensation. So, we raised our night temp to 50 degrees, which made the conditions perfect for *Phytophthora.* We also sanitized the edges around the greenhouse interior, and the plastic. We made sure we were keeping it clean and dry by watering significantly less for the winter months. Every year it seemed the conditions in the greenhouse were prime for some sort of pathogen.

Phytophthora, sometimes referred to as water mold, can remain dormant for years in soils until conditions become favorable, which happened first in a bed of dusty miller. Downy mildew thrives under cool nights and wet conditions, with sporulation on the undersides of the leaves (different than the powdery mildew that you may experience on zinnias), making it even harder to treat. *Rhizoctonia solani* is a pathogen that cannot be completely controlled, and likes it warmer than downy mildew, making it hard to find the right temperature for the greenhouse. These can remain in soil for years to come; it was even suspected that theses pathogens were in my soils before we were farming here.

We had professors from The Ohio State University come out and they would have a heyday looking for pathogens, once declaring it a "raging infection". They'd find pathogens on the underside of so many leaves, which was really disheartening. They suggested a soil drench once a week with synthetic fungicide, move the greenhouses to another location, replace all the dirt in the ground beds with fresh clean soil, or find someone who can steam the beds—all seemed like not very viable options. We started with RootShield and ZeroTol, but those would have been more useful in prevention than treatment. We used Aliette as a soil drench because it was something Dr. Hand suggested from her research, but we were still seeing some disease pressure. Since we grow mostly organic, we weren't pleased with using a conventional chemical and not seeing results, so we opted for steaming as another solution. We were warned of the dangers of the pressurized tank, but knew this may be the only way we would be able to grow year-round sticking to organic practices.

We are a part of the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association, so we reached out to ask if any of them had experience with using steam for disease control in greenhouses. We got a response from Pete Johnson of Pete's Greens who told us he had gotten a few out of Canada that were used for tobacco production, and that he was using it for weed control in his greenhouses. So up to Vermont we went to procure one to try to come up with organic methods of weed and disease control, with help from this ASCFG grant.

Research

We really had to look back and found a couple articles in the *Ball Red Book*, 13th edition. If you go any more recent than the 13th edition (1975), the authors didn't talk about it. Growers went from steaming to using methyl bromide instead, a less labor-intensive bang for your buck, but now illegal for use in fumigation. Steve talked a lot to Joe Schmitt about his time steaming beds in his youth, and tried to reach out to anyone else with steaming experience—academics and growers.

He found a chart that showed at 157-178F most pathogenic bacteria, plant viruses, and weed seeds die during pasteurization. Once you start going much hotter

than that you start to sterilize your soil, killing all forms of bacteria. We wanted to pasteurize the soil, leaving the good bacteria to recolonize. Nitrifying bacteria die above 180F, which help break down nitrates into available nitrogen for the plant. Ammonifying bacteria are hardier and break down nitrates into ammonium, which can sometimes burn plant roots (*Ball Red Book,* 13th Edition).

Worried about killing good bacteria, we turned to technical information from the composting process. Good compost needs to be heated up to 160-170F and turned multiple times to keep the microbes active. Once you go over those temperatures you risk suffocating biological activity. Well-made compost kills pathogens and weed seeds if done correctly. So, I wanted to try to emulate a composting process in my greenhouse beds, minus the organic matter unfortunately.

Methods

We purchased an old "steam Jenny" and made minor repairs to get it up and running. It's just a big metal drum, and an oil burner that heats up the water inside, and with low pressure of 15 psi. *WARNING: If not used correctly this piece of machine can be dangerous, so we made sure to replace the pressure relief valve. We had to buy a specialty tarp that could hold up to high temperatures. We also got a canvas sock to carry the steam the length of the bed. We use logging chain to hold the tarp down as the steam lifts the tarp and makes a big bubble.*

We started by trying to steam a full bed (300 square feet) at a time, and that was too much area. We've found that it works most efficiently for us to do half a bed (176 sq. ft.) at a time. In most cases this take us 1.5 to 1.75 hours per half bed, to get up to 176 degrees and hold it there for 30 minutes. There were days when we would try to do more than half a bed at a time, and it seemed as if we were using up too many labor hours for a bed, that's how we ended up on half beds at a time. On a normal day we would get the steamer out to the greenhouse from the barn, hook it up to water to fill the tank, and end up doing one bed.

A steam sock is used to distribute the steam down the length of the bed. The tarp goes down over the bed to hold the steam into the soil.

We found that soil moisture and depth have an effect on how long it takes. We are generally going four inches deep for disease control, but for weed control, 2" is plenty and really speeds up the process. There were days it seemed like it was hard to get it up to temperature down to 4", and other days we had no issue. We had some mechanical issues along the way that had Steve scratching his head, really scientifically.

On our best days it can take 2.5 hours per 300 sq. ft. bed. This uses .04 gallons per sq. ft. (or 12 gallons per bed of diesel) at $2.75/gallon, total cost of $33 a bed.

Our cost of labor is about $.22 sq. ft. so total per bed, the steamer cost $66 labor and $33 fuel to kill all the weeds and diseases we have been dealing with. We were able to compare this with the cost of us weeding and hoeing a bed in enterprise budgets, not accounting for loss we would have had in the bed from disease pressure. On paper, even with labor hours it takes steaming, it came out to make a crop more profitable than the labor it would have taken to weed this bed two to three times a season.

The stock bed when diseases (downy mildew and *Rhizoctonia*) were prevalent in the greenhouse, causing yellowing of the leaves and killing off small plants before they rooted. The winter weeds in the beds and walkways took a lot of time to deal with during our winter hours.

Out of our 55 greenhouse beds we have steamed all but six. We left one bed in each house unsteamed and treated it as we normally treated beds. These beds were our control in the experiment, so we could compare weed and disease pressure in different locations and on different crops.

From some of the first beds we steamed, we did notice on one bed the ranunculus seemed to be yellowing a bit, nothing we had ever seen. We sent plant tissue off to be tested and they found no trace of disease. We later figured out that it was the bed that we were a little too eager to plant and didn't let the bed cool overnight before planting, and shocked the plant with about 120-degree soil. Oops.

The clean beds in this photo were in a steamed bed where we have experienced no soil borne disease pressure, and haven't had to hoe yet this spring!

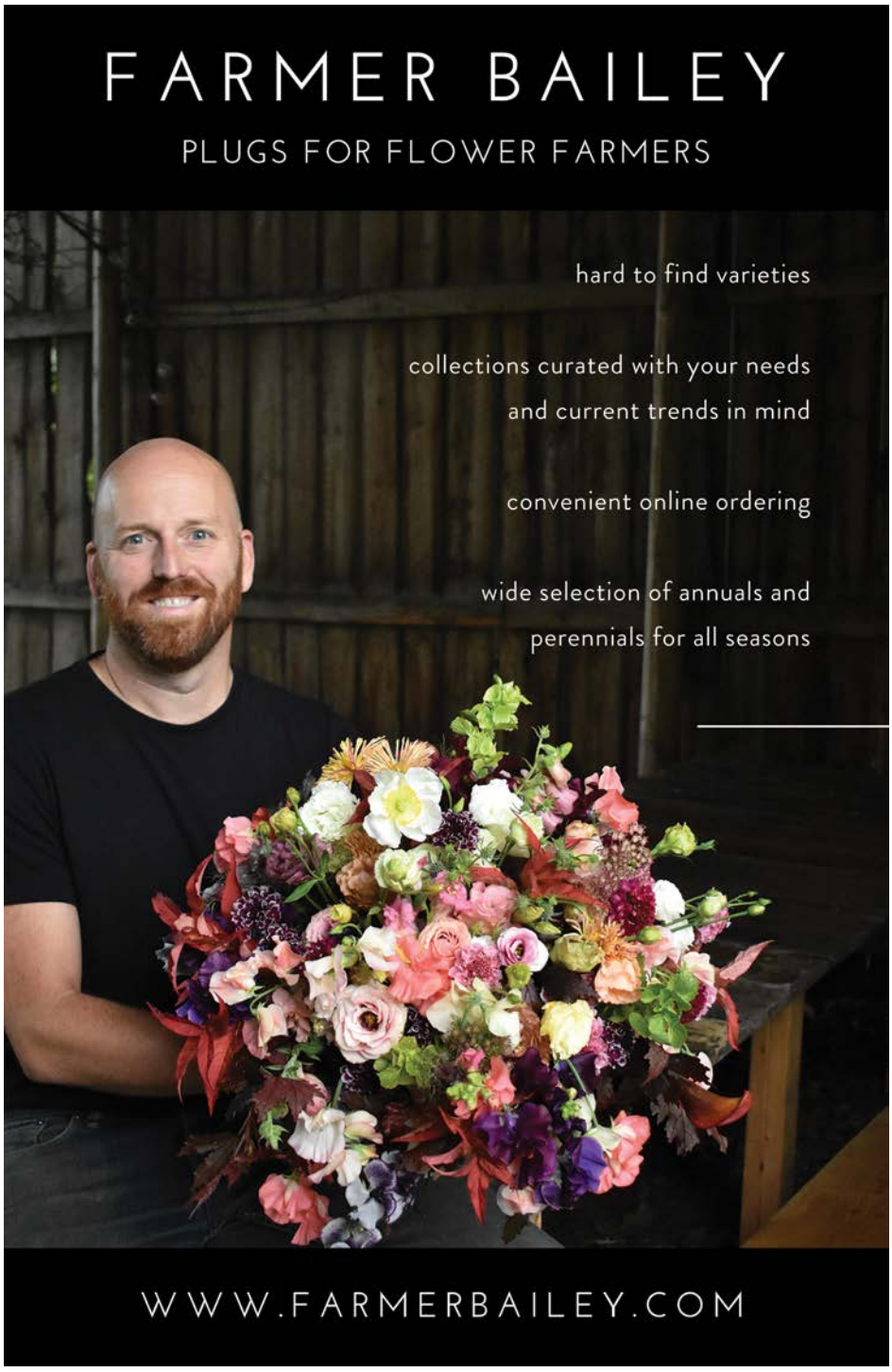
We were also concerned about adding compost before the steaming process, so we left half the beds uncomposted with the plan to compost them after winter production, and to the other half of the beds we added two inches of leaf compost. We again saw no repercussions either way on plant growth.

In conclusion, we have yet to see any soil-borne diseases in the greenhouse, so we plan to steam our soil in all greenhouse beds at least once a year. We feel as if it is making growing flowers in the greenhouses fun again. We used to spend a lot of time weeding greenhouse beds—during the winter chickweed could become a carpet, and *Galinsoga* during the summer is a nightmare. We think that soil steaming for organic weed and disease control is a viable option for someone who enjoys using equipment and doesn't enjoy spraying. We look forward to being able to continue research as we gain more experience with the results.

References

Ball Red Book, 13th Edition. 1975.

The U.C. system for producing healthy container-grown plants: Through the use of clean soil, clean stock, and sanitation (California Agricultural ...Agricultural Extension Service. Manual 23). 1957. Baker, Kenneth F.



Cost-Effective Organic Prevention of Downy Mildew on Zinnias

Renee Clayton, Wild Scallions Farm

Introduction

Zinnias are productive, profitable workhorses on many flower farms, but most of the popular tall cut flower varieties are sensitive to a host of fungal and bacterial diseases, especially powdery mildew. Disease infection affects zinnia vase life, reduces yields of salable stems, and forces many farmers to plant multiple successions or even eliminate this lovely flower from their planting schedules altogether.

To address these issues, we tested the efficacy of low-cost organic foliar sprays in preventing fungal infection over the zinnia-growing season. Specifically, we tested the application of pure neem oil or whey. Cold-pressed pure neem oil is a broad-based immune stimulant as well as a natural insect repellant, and is OMRI approved. Whey is an excellent low-cost probiotic high in calcium. The test sprays of pure neem oil and whey were compared to a control condition (no foliar spray), and Serenade, a commercially available organic bio-fungicide already commonly used to combat powdery mildew.

Procedure

Direct seeded a 152-foot row of Benary's Giant BluePoint Series mixed colors on 4/10/2017. Due to insufficient germination, the row was reseeded on 5/9/2017 with good results. The row was divided into four 38-foot sections with landscape fabric on either side of the row (Image 1). Preventive spraying commenced three weeks after sowing according to the following plan listed in Table 1.

Image 1. Zinnia test row (rightmost row) on 6/25/2017, week 7 of study, note Japanese beetle damage to leaves

Table 1. Test Foliar Sprays

Foliar Spray	Cost per gallon pure product	Cost per gallon diluted test spray
Whey (5.3% concentration)	$0.25	$0.25
Control no spray		
Pure Neem Oil (applied 0.5% concentration)	$176	$1.03
Serenade (2% concentration)	$56	$1.31

Foliar sprays were applied every three weeks, for a total of 4 applications. Once the plants began to flower, salable stem counts (no disease observable on top 2 sets of leaves) were recorded for each trial condition.

Flowers were harvested into well water. Harvested stems were processed, then transferred into clean buckets and conditioned in water treated with Chrysal gerbera tablets. Each week 3 stems were randomly selected from each condition for a vase life study conducted at ambient basement temperature in plain well water.

Results and Observations

Harvest commenced six weeks after direct sowing seed and continued for a further 13 weeks (late June through mid September). Table 2 compiles the total harvest data for each test section. Figure 1 breaks down the harvest each week.

Table 2. Compiled Harvest Data

Foliar Spray	Total Stems	Plants per Section	Stems per Plant	Stems per Bed Foot	Avg. Plant Spacing (inches)
Whey	808	65	12.43	21.26	7.01
Control	575	87	6.61	15.13	5.24
Neem Oil	709	83	8.54	18.66	5.49
Serenade	836	62	13.48	22.00	7.35

The middle of June brought a generally expected onslaught of Japanese beetles, and no foliar spray dampened their appetite for zinnia foliage and flower petals. The beetles moved on (to munch the dahlias!) and the zinnias outgrew the damage. Downy mildew was first observed on the lower leaves of some plants nine weeks into the study, with downy mildew present in all sections by week ten (Image 2). Two weeks later there was a general crash in production mostly due to the pervasive presence of downy mildew. Interestingly, the sections treated with whey and Serenade had a late summer rally with increased production of disease-free new growth. In the late summer the section treated with neem oil also had notably less downy mildew than the control, but a much higher rate of bacterial leaf spot, which still made the stems un-harvestable (Image 3). By the end of the study, the section treated with Serenade yielded the most salable stems with 836 stems, or 13.48 per plant. The section treated with whey was a close second with 808 stems. These yields were significantly greater than the control section with 575 stems.

Small differences in average plant spacing also correlated to less disease as expressed as more harvestable stems. Figure 2 illustrates this relationship.

There was no statistical difference in the average vase life of stems from different sections. However, there was a general trend through the season. The average vase life of stems from each week of the study is plotted in Figure 2. Average vase life peaked in mid July at about 8 days. The weather conditions in which the flowers were picked did effect the vase life. The end of August brought the remnants of a tropical storm and a long stretch of rainy weather and no choice but to harvest wet stems during week 16, these stems had an average vase life of 5 days and generally heralded the end of quality stems from the study row.

Figure 1. Zinnia Stem Harvest through the Season

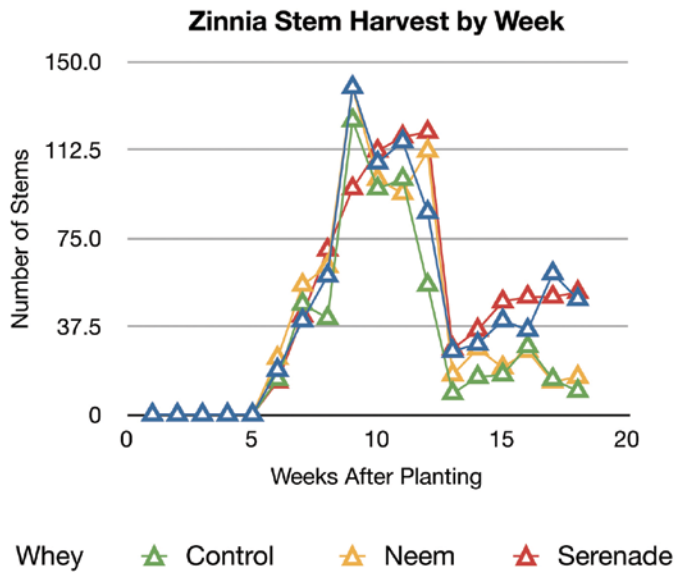


Image 2. Zinnia with powdery mildew on lower leaves, 7/21/2017, week 10 of study

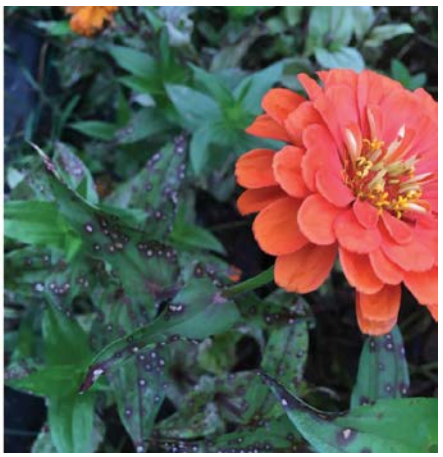


Image 3. Zinnia with bacterial leaf spot, 9/1/2017, week 16 of study, from neem oil-treated section

Figure 2. Plant Spacing Compared to Total Harvest

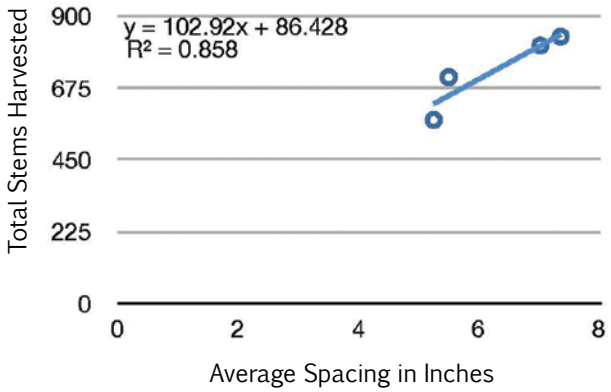
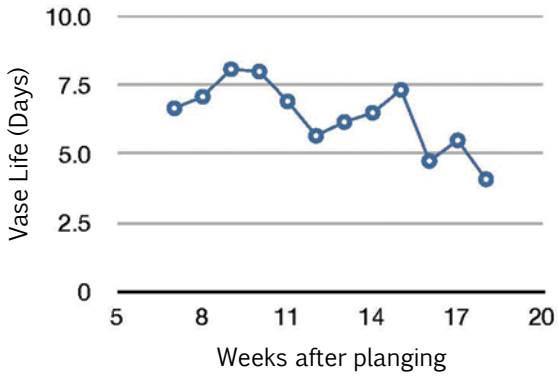


Figure 3. Average Vase Life (Days) Through the Season



Conclusion

As so often seems the case with a close look, this study yielded some very interesting trends without any great presumption of certainty. Compared with the control, preventative foliar applications of whey, neem oil, or Serenade all increased the number of harvestable stems over the 18 weeks of the study, but had no impact on vase life, and did not prevent a drastic reduction of harvestable stems after six weeks of harvest (week 13 of the study), although these products did stave off this fall in production by a week in comparison to the control. While foliar applications with neem oil did help decrease the impact of powdery mildew on the zinnia plants, it increased the impact of bacterial leaf spot in the late summer and early fall, greatly reducing flower yields for the last six weeks of the study.

Foliar sprays of whey, neem oil, or Serenade were all very cost effective. Prepared sprays of neem oil or Serenade cost about a dollar a gallon, and whey can often be sourced at very low cost or free from local dairies as the byproduct of cheese making.

This study did not control for bed spacing, since the row was direct seeded at the same seeding rate. The number of plants in each test condition were counted, though, and there was a correlation between greater average plant spacing and more harvestable stems (less disease). In a future study, it would be helpful to quantify bed spacing and remove this variable.

Foliar applications of whey or Serenade proved to be most beneficial in reducing powdery mildew and other diseases that reduce the productivity of zinnia plantings. They were not enough, however, to maintain a constant supply of quality cut stems through the season. Successive plantings would still be recommended.

Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

Lori Allcorn, Cherry Blossom Flower Farm, Broken Arrow, OK
Linda Anderson, My Lady's Choice Farm, Greenbush, VA
Kelly Austin, The Dahlia Patch, Pine Beach, NJ
Meghan Baker, North Carolina State University, Asheville, NC
Josie Baxter, Chantilly, VA
Theresa Berger, Flora and Field, Mount Sterling, OH
Cris Blackstone, Make Scents, Newmarket, NH
David Blue, Meadowbrook, PA
Sarah Boles, Northern Native Plantscapes, Cable, WI
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Sarah and Scott Buerkley, Sarah's Cottage Creations, Stillwater, MN
Chelsea Bunn, Wild & Tame Cut Flowers, Seneca, SC
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Katy Burke, Burke's Blooms, Milton, MA
Tracy Bush, Flower Farm, Sheridan, WY
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Aubrey Cooper, Chaney Acres Flower Farm, Zachary, LA
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Sheila Daminski, Grand Island, NY
Barbara Davis, Hog Lot Flowers at Davis Farm, Portsmouth, OH
Derna DeMaggio, Salt Lake City, UT
Brenda and Mark Depew, Mrs. D's Dahlias, Hudson, OH
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Alyssa Dotson, Aly's Blooms, Andover, KS
Leah Ducey, Bordentown, NJ
Racheal Duffy, Bent River Flowers, Pisgah Forest, NC
Lisa Durr, James Durr Wholesale Flowers Chesterfield, NJ
Ellen Eardley, Washington, DC
Gail Helhoski and Emily Casey, New Vernon, NJ
Tenille Enger, Lucky Clover Flowers, Traverse City, MI
Cary Engle, Flourish Flowers, Averill Park, NY
Shari Ermocida, Ball Tagawa Growers, Arroyo Grande, CA
Kristen Farmer, Hope Dahlias, Allendale, MI
Cindy Farrish, Weyers Cave, VA
Elizabeth Faucher, Leap Frog Farm, Earlysville, VA
Lori Feldish, WhistleStop Blooms, Barnesville, PA
Sarah Felts, Blooming Ground, Floyd, VA
Joshua Fine, Fine Family Flower Farm, Tollhouse, CA
Luke Franco, Tiny Hearts Farm, Copake, NY
Claudine Fredy, Pedals Flower Farm, Iola, WI
Pam Fry, Purple Rain Lavender and Flower Farm, Churchville, MD
Angela Frystak, Montrose, PA
Melissa Garcia Parry, Howl and Whistle Flower Farm, Eugene, OR
Laura Wulff Garcin, Ball Tagawa Growers, Arroyo Grande, CA
Malinda Garris, Vienna, VA
Amanda Gaspar, Syringa Flower Farm, Gooding, ID
Samantha Gasson, Bull City Farm Flowers, Rougemont, NC
Katharine Gilman, Petal by Pedal Inc., New York, NY
Terrie Godfrey, The Stem Shire, Berlin Heights, OH
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Colene Greening, Tria Bordo Farm, Arcadia, MI
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Kat Jenkins, Treworgy Family Orchards, Levant, ME
Natalie Jennings, Alton Farmstead, Galloway, OH
Kathleen Johnson, Flowers for You, Atlantic, IA
Andrea Jones, Riverton, NJ
Florence Jones, Flo's Blossoms & Herbs, Warrenton, VA
Karen and Gertrude Jones, Hillalea Farm, Pittsboro, NC
Teresa Jones, The Queen Bea, Wellington, OH
Linda Dwyer and Joseph Andorfer, Andorfer Acres West, Fort Wayne, IN
Michelle Kenstler, Kempton, PA
Carl and Sarah Kistner, Stone Meadow Gardens, Castlegar, BC
Ellen Knight, River Road Florals, Chico, CA
Wonder Koch, Alice Blue Collective, St. Louis, MO
Frances Kremer, Frances Kremer Cutting Garden, Vickery, OH
Buddy Krietsch, Saint James, NY
Morgan Lake, Northwind Blooms, Williamsburg, MI
Elisa Lane, Two Boots Farm, Hampstead, MD
Kimberly Lango, Prairie Sky Farm, Cheney, WA
Joseph and Carly Ledger, Aromatic Acres, Milwaukee, WI

Casey Lemieux, The Flower Garden, Coopersville, MI
Heather Letarte, White Gates Farm, Tamworth, NH
Lynn Lipkvich, Spruce Lane Farm, Brookfield, VT
Christina Lueking, Flower Girls, Woodlawn, IL
Sarah Lunstrum, Dream Farm Flowers, Boise, ID
Kate Lyons, Erie, IL
Jennifer McAtee, Holy Cow Farm, Bangor, PA
Stacy McCabe, Birch Lane Farm, Bixby, OK
Michael McLane, Broadfork Meadows Farm, Rising Fawn, GA
Lisa and Alyssa McPhee, Oakdale, CA
Vicki Meads, Cullman, AL
Nancy Miller, Sterling, MA
Candice Mock, Patchwork Planting, Sweet Valley, PA
Kristen Muehlhauser, Raindance Organic Farm, Whitmore Lake, MI
Pat Mullen, Mayesh Wholesale Florist, Los Angeles, CA
Barb Munson, Zionsville, IN
Elizabeth Nadeau, Lyons, NY
Gina Neily, Floraison Farm, Epsom, NH
Heather Nordella, Cottage Grove, OR
Janice Norris, Three Seasons Flower Farm, Northport, AL
Jennifer Norton, Naches, WA
Shelley Novakowski, The Cheshire Farmacy, Canandaigua, NY
Claire O'Brien, Sunnyside Flowers, Dover, PA
Diane Olson, Freeport, IL
Susan Orellana-Clark, Bristol Hills Lavender & Flower Farm, Bloomfield, NY
Shalon Osler, Montana Lake Getaway, Bozeman, MT
Ashley Parker, Parker Farm and Vineyard, Hurdle Mills, NC
Carrie-Anne Parker, Rolling Hills Herbs & Annuals, Redlands, CA
Colleen Payne, Reverie Farm, Leawood, KS
Becky and Spencer Peet, Levee View Farm, Cincinnati, OH
Charlotte Pemberton, Whangarei, NEW ZEALAND
Mackenzie Perkins, Boots and Shoots, North Chesterfield, VA
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Honey Bee Puder, Eva's Garden, South Dartmouth, MA
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Natalie Reeves, Splendid Farm, Eugene, OR
Julia Reinprecht, Griffith Hill Farm, Perkasie, PA
Nikki Ridenour, Pith & Petal, Cincinnati, OH
Caitlin Robinson, Sungold Flower Co., Dickerson, MD
Sarah Robinson, Sarah's Petals, Fincastle, VA
James Roebuck, Roebuck Farms, Robersonville, NC
Jessica Romano, Omniflora Farm, Kittery, ME
Debbie Roos, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Pittsboro, NC
Carolyn Rose-Seed, MamaSprings Farm, Durham, NC
Daniel Rosenfeld, Leamington, ON
Kim Rucker, Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, TN
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Karen Russo, Wetumpka, AL
Clara Rutenbeck, Stoneset Farm, Brooklin, ME
Emily Saeger, Saratoga, CA
Stephanie Scheerhorn, Branch and Stem Flower Farm, Holland, MI
Eva Schmitz, Palatine Fruit and Roses, Niagara On the Lake, ON
Barbara Schwenk, Machipongo, VA
Tracy Shelton, Vine & Petals, Niceville, FL
Melanie Sisson, Great Falls, VA
Brenda Slack, Milk House Farm Market, Newtown, PA
Chris Smedley, Shreve, OH
Belinda Smith, Pickens, SC
Cindy K. Smith, Blooms of Bourbon County, Paris, KY
Stephanie Smith, Raymond, AB
Deanna Spraker, Magnolia Lane Farms, Rural Retreat, VA
Karen St. Rain, Glorious Daylily Farm, Heltonville, IN
Walter Stachecki, Bridgehampton, NY
Jonathan Stefani, Stefani Family Farm, Auburn, CA
Timothy Steinhoff, Germantown Blooms, Germantown, NY
Kathy Stewart, Crow Meadow Farm, Toano, VA
James Sutton, Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, PA
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Craig Walters, AGRIscapes, Pomona, CA
Alayna Ward, Blue Fox Flower Farm, Lexington, NC
Molly Watson, Watson's Acres, Sunbury, OH
Melody Whealdon, Bainbridge Island, WA
Katelyn Wietor, Good Omen Farm, Bealeton, VA
Yvonne Williams, South Branch Valley Produce, Moorefield, WV
Meghan Wingenfeld, Wild Fox & Flower, Cleveland, OH
Terri Wright, Columbia, MO
Georgia Yanchar, Kvennabrekka Farms, Chardon, OH
Joan Zacharias, JZ Flowers, Valley City, OH
Dawn Zimmerman, Ethel's Backyard, Media, PA
Bridget Zurcher, Aunt Beez Greenhouse, Scales Mound, IL
Sarah Zwissler, Nehalem, OR

Thanks for the Good Word!

You connected some of our new members to the ASCFG!

Gretel & Steve Adams
Rita Anders
Chet Anderson
Allan Armitage
Frank & Pamela Arnosky
Nellie Ashmore
Missy Bahret
Britton Barbee
Erin Benzakein
Christof Bernau
Bob & Terry Berry
Laura Bigbee-Fott
Rebecca Bodicky
Mary Jo Borchardt
Joy Boudreaux
Stacy Brenner
Lynn Byczynski
Mark Cain
Seth Chapin
Linda Chapman
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James DelPrince
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Chas Gill
Miriam Goldberger
Bailey Hale
Melanie Harrington
Janis Harris
Elizabeth Hendricks
Joyce Holzapfel
Vickie Williams Hott
Jane Hudon
Arjen Huese
Mike Huggett
Polly Hutchison
Cathy Jones
Gibby Knoebel
Barb Lamborne
Vicki Lander
Lennie Larkin
Hans Larsen
Katie Laushman
Joanna Lentz
Charles Little
Rachel Lord
Jennie Love
Sharon Loving
Howie & Judy Lubbers
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Sarah Stokes Marshall
Jeannie McKewan
Erin McMullen
Mark McVay
Peg Mere
Marina Michahelles
Tim & Donna Mills
Mary Ellen Muth
Jennifer Nelson
Gretchen O'Neil
Henk Onings
Mandy & Steve O'Shea
Traci Parriman
Nancy Person
Susan Rockwood Peterson
Deb Pflug
Debra Prinzing
Brianna Quinn
Shanti Rade
Denise Richter
Caitlin Roberts
Jamie Rohda
Nelson Rohrer
Jamie Sammons
Val Schirmer
Joe Schmitt
Michelle Shackelford
Carolyn Snell
Trisha Snyder
Kaye Studer
Maggie Taylor
Ralph Thurston
Beth Van Sandt
Katie Vontz
Jessica Weatherford
Mike & Rita Williams
Karin Woodward
Lisa Ziegler
Gail Zorn

Call for Nominations

Writing for *The Cut Flower Quarterly*. Organizing and executing national and regional meetings. Creating new programs and services for ASCFG members. These tasks and many more are accomplished by a volunteer Board of Directors. If you're grateful for the time and energy past Boards have donated to the ASCFG, continue and contribute to their success by serving on the Board.

This summer you'll have the chance to run for West and Northwest Regional Director, a three-year term. This Region includes Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington.

The offices of President and Vice President are also open for election to three-year terms. The President charts the course for the organization; serves as the ASCFG's central promotional figure and as its representative to the floral industry; presides at all meetings of the Board, general meetings of the organization, and at any special meetings; and performs all other duties incident to the office or required by the Board of Directors. Candidates for President must have previously served on the ASCFG Board. In the absence of the President, the Vice President performs the duties of the President as well as such other duties as assigned by the President and/or Board; and serves as chair of the Nominations Committee.

For more information and background, contact the ASCFG office. We'll be happy to fill you in!

Ask an Expert!

LIVE

Our Facebook Live events continue.
Log on to learn from these Experts:

April 9 - Jennie Love
May 14 - Carolyn Snell
June 11 - Brenda Smith
July 9 - Janis Harris
August 13 - Mimo Davis-Duschack
September 10 - Shanti Rade
October 8 - Linda Doan
November 12 - Val Schirmer
December 10 - Dave Dowling

Previous Expert sessions are archived in the ASCFG Members Facebook page, in Videos.

Dave Dowling Scholarship Winners

Nathan Jahnke
North Carolina State University

Every spring I am excited to get out in the field to grow and harvest our trials. This experience has helped me realize the diversity of plants that can be grown as cut flowers, and the strong specialty cut flower community.

Nathan earned a master's degree, and will complete his doctorate, with John Dole at NCSU. He published his first scientific paper while still an undergraduate, and has provided several articles for *The Cut Flower Quarterly*.

Joanna LeFleur Lambert
Louisiana State University

My fascination with plants has slowly enveloped my life like the growth of a tree. Although I cannot pinpoint when my fascination started, I do know who planted the seeds within me: my grandma.

Joanna is a plant and soil systems major at LSU, as well as a Level One Floral Design certified florist with the Texas State Floral Association.

Daisy Sturgill
Virginia Tech

It is a long-term goal of mine to one day operate my own farm. I deeply believe in the importance of local growers of all sorts, and I want to bring the beauty of local flowers to my community, wherever I settle.

Daisy will graduate from Virginia Tech this December, with a degree in environmental horticulture. She has worked on a blueberry farm and a cut flower operation, and in the Virginia Tech horticulture greenhouses.

Johannes Van Essendelft

Before I could work on my own, I would always go with my father, on the tractor to cultivate the peony fields, taking walks in the warmth of spring, or going out and helping them cut. From a young age, I fell in the love with the whole peony process.

Johannes plans to attend Beaufort County Community College and North Carolina State University, and to continue to work on his family's cut peony flower farm.

2018 Raleigh Beginning Growers' School

Monday, September 24
Sassafras Fork Farm, Rougemont, North Carolina
Limited to 125 attendees

8:00 a.m. **Buses leave hotel**

9:00 a.m. **IPM for New Growers**
Stanton Gill, University of Maryland
Stanton is one of the few academic entomologists who has extensive experience with cut flower growers and their farms. Learn how to identify and control some of the most common pests you're likely to encounter.

10:00 a.m. **Ecologically-based Weed Management: Giving Your Flowers the Ecological Leg up over Weeds**
Brenda Smith, Hines, Oregon
Weeds can be a nemesis for flower growers and all those weeds wreak havoc on profitability. Because flower production is often intensive with many varieties over small spaces, using herbicides as a tool can be challenging. We will use this time to better understand the ecological principles playing out in the field that ultimately sets up the weed problems and then recognize how these principles can be applied to give flowers a growing advantage over weeds.

11:00 a.m. **Irrigation, Coolers, and More**
Details TBD

12:30 p.m. **Lunch included**

2018 Raleigh Beginning Growers' School

1:30 p.m. **Hot Crops for the Cool Season**
Mimo Davis-Duschack, Urban Buds City Grown Flowers, St. Louis, Missouri
Lisa Ziegler, The Gardener's Workshop, Newport News, Virginia
Mimo and Lisa discuss the early cash crops of spring. Learn which varieties are best, and how to grow them in the field and hoophouse.

2:30 p.m. **The $64,000 Question: What Price?**
Jennie Love, Love 'n Fresh Flowers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Every small business, regardless of their product, struggles with finding a profitable framework for pricing. Having a successful flower farm goes far beyond just growing blooms. Pricing is a tricky subject, and no one really has a straight answer because there's no cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all price list. Jennie will discuss what factors you should be considering when deciding how to price your flowers, many of which you may not have thought of as a newer grower/designer.

3:30 p.m.. **Postharvest: The Last Talk of the Day, but the Most Important One of Your Business**
John Dole, North Carolina State University, Raleigh
The secrets of postharvest handling will be revealed. Learn how to make your flowers last as long as possible for your customers.

5:00 p.m. **Dinner and Barn Dance for Growers' School attendees**
8:00 p.m. **Buses leave for hotel**

2018 ASCFG Conference

Tuesday, September 25 - North Raleigh Hilton, Raleigh
Morning and Afternoon Speaker Sessions
Evening Trade Show

Morning General Sessions

8:30 a.m. **Welcome and Introductions**
Dave Dowling, Ednie Flower Bulb, ASCFG President

8:45 a.m. **New Varieties Festival and Cut Flowers of the Year Announcement**
John Dole, North Carolina State University, ASCFG Executive Advisor

9:30 a.m. **TBD**

11:00 a.m. **Show Us Your Farm Hacks!**
Here's your chance to share your own inventions, your ingenuity, and your creativity. What processes have you developed to increase efficiency on your farm? Did you modify a tool or tractor to better suit your production? Send your photos to us at mail@ascfg.org and be ready to talk about them in Raleigh.

Afternoon Concurrent Sessions

1:00 p.m.

Make Weddings Work for YOU
Lennie Larkin, B-Side Farm
Sebastopol, California

SEO: The Secret Weapon to Maximizing Your Online Presence
Jesse Perry, Philosophy Flowers
Boone, North Carolina

High Tunnels for Cut Flowers
Leah Cook, Wild Hare Farm
Cedar Grove, North Carolina

2:00 p.m.

Cracking the Cascading Bouquet Conundrum
Jennie Love, Love 'n Fresh Flowers
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

It's a Beautiful Day for a Farmers' Market
Shanti Rade, Whipstone Farm
Paulden, Arizona
Jamie Rohda, Harvest Home
Waverly, Nebraska
Valerie Schirmer, Three Toads Farm
Winchester, Kentucky

Peony Production
Foxie Morgan, Pharsalia Events
Roseland, Virginia

3:00 p.m.

Extra Texture: Crops to Add Sparkle to Your Design Work
Carolyn Snell, Carolyn Snell Designs
Bar Mills, Maine

Cooperative Marketing
Kelly Morrison, Piedmont Flower Market
Durham, North Carolina

It's All About Soil
Alex Hitt, Peregrine Farm
Graham, North Carolina

5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Trade Show and Reception

Wednesday, September 26 - North Raleigh Hilton, Raleigh
Morning Farm Tours (Tour limited to 200 attendees)
Afternoon Speaker Sessions
Evening Banquet

7:00 a.m. Buses leave hotel Tour Spring Forth Farm and Open Door Farm

30 years 1988-2018 Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers

Afternoon Concurrent Sessions

1:30 p.m.

Cut Flower Insects
Raymond Cloyd, Kansas State
Manhattan

Floral Design Trends
Debra Prinzing, Slow Flowers
Seattle, Washington

2:30 p.m.

Lisianthus
Linda Doan, Aunt Willie's Wildflowers
Blountville, Tennessee

Maintaining Work-Life Balance
Mark Cain, Dripping Springs Garden
Huntsville, Arkansas

3:30 p.m.

Grow More on Less: Go Organic!
Lisa Ziegler, The Gardener's Workshop
Newport News, Virginia

Postharvest Research Results You Can Use
John Dole, North Carolina State University
Raleigh, North Carolina

1:30 p.m.

Understanding the Legal and Financial Structure of Your Business
Poppy Davis
Berkeley, California

3:00 p.m.

Taxes, Taxes, Taxes
Poppy Davis
Berkeley, California

6:00 p.m.

Reception and 30th Anniversary Banquet

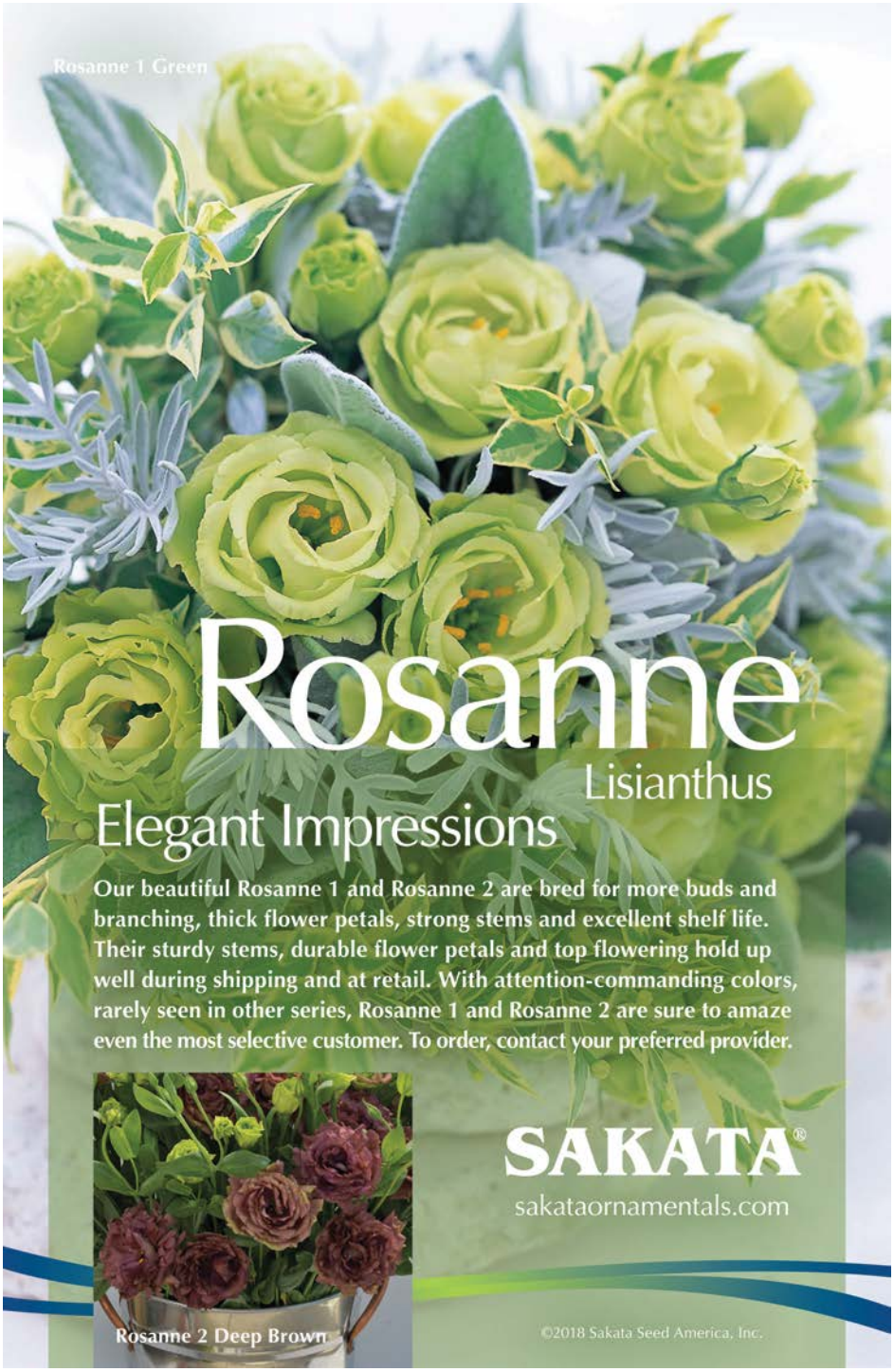
Farm Tour

Jonathan and Megan Leiss

We are a 100% no-till small farm, using occultation, mulching and cover cropping. When folks come in September, we should have beds of dahlias, mums, and foliages. Our germination room will be full of trays of our first round of hardy annual flower starts for fall planting and overwintering. All in all, visitors will see a beautiful, working farm run by people like them who are trying to figure it out, too.

Ross and Jillian Mickens

Open Door Farm is a small vegetable and flower farm located in Cedar Grove. We love growing the best food and flowers using organic and sustainable farming practices. As our farm name implies, we are very "open" and love educating you on how our food and flowers are grown!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Hotel Reservations

Make your reservations now at the Hilton North Raleigh/Midtown. Call Hilton Reservations at (919) 872-2323, OPTION 1 and use the conference code FLOWER for the group rate of $159. To book online, go to https://tinyurl.com/y9p5jlkx

In Memoriam: Gay Smith

Judy M. Laushman

1955-2018

Gay Smith's sisters, Joy and Susie, love to share the story about Gay years ago making the simple statement "There's probably nothing I don't know about cut flowers."

Joy and Susie got a kick out of this declaration, and used it often to tease her about her self-confidence. But they, along with the rest of the international floral industry, came to realize that this was not an empty boast.

After earning a degree in environmental horticulture at the University of Arizona, Gay worked for a retail florist in San Francisco, then at the San Francisco Flower Market. This led to a three-year term in the Netherlands, where, from 1981 to 1983, she was the only woman, and the only American, to hold a seat at the Aalsmeer Flower Auction. Her already comprehensive knowledge of the range of floral product available from countries around the world deepened and broadened, and her love of travel and self-education became realized.

Gay became the go-to expert on the postharvest of cut flowers and other floral material, and joined the team at Chrysal in 2001. She wrote articles for several publications, including *The Cut Flower Quarterly* and the SAF's *Floral Management.* Gay was constantly on the road: visiting farms and greenhouses in North and South America, the Netherlands, Israel, and Africa. She spoke to anyone who handled flowers, from growers of hundreds of field acres, to small retail florists, to grocery store clerks, to wholesale importers and sellers. A naturally happy person, she had an easy rapport with everyone she met; whether she talked to an ASCFG member just getting started, or to a Dutch family in business for years, she immediately made a personal connection, which gained her not only much respect, but many, many friends.

Gay and I became friends in 1990. We shared a love of books, wine, and wondering why so many people feel the need to use an apostrophe when making plurals. Even if we saw each other only once a year, we'd immediately fall back into the conversation we'd left off months before. At last year's ASCFG meeting in Portland, we had to be shushed because our laughter at the back of the room was disturbing other attendees.

For Gay's memorial service on March 24, more flowers were sent to her house in Portland than probably fill a wholesale house in one day. Her friends and her sisters' friends spent a day creating large designs for the church, and mason jar bouquets for visitors to take home, with a note from Gay and a Chrysal packet attached. The crates crammed with jars had been set outside, but when it started to rain at three in the morning, Joy and Susie hustled to bring them all back to the cozy basement.

Then, Joy told me, she could hear Gay telling her "Wet, warm conditions are PERFECT for botrytis development! Better get some air moving on those flowers NOW." so they scrambled to place fans around the crates. The next morning, the blooms were fresh and unblemished.

Clearly, Gay really did know everything about cut flowers, and shared this knowledge with everyone she knew. She will be missed.

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